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SRI AUROBINDO

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PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Introduction

In the galaxy of brilliant men who laid the foundations of our new nation in the wake of the Indian Renaissance, Sri Aurobindo occupied a pre-eminent place. A sage who gave new dimensions to the Indian mind, a thinker who imparted a fresh orientation to the higher thought, a revolutionary who inspired a whole generation, a humanist whose compassion encompassed the entire globe, a visionary who dreamed of divine light and perfection, Sri Aurobindo was indeed a rare human phenomenon. He represented, in the words of Romain Rolland, "the completest synthesis that has been realised to this day of the genius of Asia and the genius of Europe."

EARLY LIFE

Sri Aurobindo was born in Calcutta on August 15, 1872. His father Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose was a distinguished surgeon and given to the European way of life. A firm believer in western civilisation he wanted his three sons to receive only English education. Young Aurobindo was therefore sent to Loretto Convent School at Darjeeling and, two years later, in 1879 he was taken to England for further studies. Sri Aurobindo lived in the U.K. for fourteen years. He was brought up at first in an English family at Manchester, where he was privately educated. At home he had been taught Latin so well that when he joined St. Paul's School, London, in 1885, the Headmaster was impressed and personally taught him Greek. In his last three years at St. Paul's, he spent all his time outside school in general reading, especially English poetry, literature and fiction, French literature and the history of ancient, medieval and modern Europe. He also picked up Italian, German and a little Spanish. He occupied himself too in writing poetry. In 1889 he went from St. Paul's with a senior classical scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, where he spent two years. Studies during this period engaged very little of his time; all the same, he was able to win all the prizes in King's College in one year for Greek and Latin verse and passed high in the First Part of the Tripos at Cambridge.

In 1890, he passed the open competition for the Indian Civil Service, but he neglected his lessons in riding and failed to appear in the riding test. He was given another chance, but avoided presenting himself in time for the test. He was on this pretext disqualified for the Service, but he felt no call for the I.C.S. and was seeking some way to escape from that bondage.

At the age of eleven Sri Aurobindo had already received strongly the impression that a period of upheaval and great revolutionary changes was coming in the world and that he himself was destined to play a part in it. But the decision to take part in some action directed towards the liberation

of his country took shape only after some years. At Cambridge, as a member of the Indian Majlis, he delivered many revolutionary speeches which, as he afterwards learnt, had their share in determining the authorities to exclude him from the Indian Civil Service. During the last days of his stay in England, he attended a private meeting of Indians in London at which there was formed a secret society, in which all the members took the vow to adopt some chosen part which would help in the overthrow of foreign rule. But the society was still-born and its members dispersed without meeting again; some, however, kept individually to their vow and one of these was Sri Aurobindo.

When Sri Aurobindo was disqualified for the Indian Civil Service, the Gaekwar of Baroda happened to be in London. Sri Aurobindo was introduced to him and obtained an appointment in the Baroda Service. He reached Baroda in February 1893. In all, he passed thirteen years, from 1893 to 1905, in the Baroda Service, first in the Settlement and Revenue Departments and in secretariat work for the Maharaja, afterwards as Professor of English and finally Vice-Principal in Baroda College.

These were years of self-culture, of literary activity, and of preparation for his future work. In England he had received an entirely occidental education without any contact with the culture of India and the East. At Baroda he made up the deficiency, learned Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages, especially Bengali, Marathi and Gujarati.

Barred from public activities by his position at Baroda, a great part of the last years of this period was spent on leave in silent political activity. The outbreak of the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 gave him the opportunity to give up the Baroda Service and join openly the political movement. He left Baroda in 1906 and went to Calcutta as Principal of the newly-founded Bengal National College.

POLITICAL LIFE

There were three sides to Sri Aurobindo's political ideas and activities. First, secret revolutionary propaganda and an organisation of which the central object was the preparation for an armed insurrection. Secondly, public propaganda, considered, when he entered into politics, by the vast majority of Indians as unpractical and impossible, an almost insane chimera. Thirdly, an organisation of the people to carry on a public and united opposition and undermine the foreign rule through an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance.

Some quarters hold that Sri Aurobindo's political standpoint was entirely pacifist, that he was opposed in principle and in practice to all violence and that he denounced terrorism, insurrection, etc., as entirely forbidden by the spirit and letter of the Hindu religion. It is even suggested that he was a forerunner of the gospel of *Ahimsa*. This is not strictly correct. The rule confining political action to passive resistance was adopted only as the best policy for the National Movement at that stage and was not a part of the gospel

of Non-violence or pacific idealism. Pacifism is the highest ideal, but its basis must be spiritual or at the very least psychological. If it is attempted on any other basis (moral principle or gospel of *Ahimsa* or any other) it will fail and may even leave things worse than before. Sri Aurobindo was in favour of an attempt to put down war by international agreement and international force, but that would not be *Ahimsa*, it would be the putting down of anarchic forces by legal force and even then one could not be sure that it would be permanent. Sri Aurobindo never concealed his opinion that a nation is entitled to attain its freedom by violence if it can do so or if there is no other way; whether or not it should do so depends on what is the best policy, not on ethical considerations only.

For the first few years in India, Sri Aurobindo abstained from any political activity, except for writing a few articles. His political work started in 1902. He met a member of the Secret Society in Western India, and took the oath of the Society. He spoke of the Society and its aim to some leading men of the revolutionary group in Bengal and they agreed to organise themselves on the lines suggested by Sri Aurobindo. This attempt at a close organisation of the whole movement did not succeed, but the movement itself did not suffer by that, for the general idea was taken up and led to a greater diffusion of the revolutionary drive and its action.

With the partition of Bengal and the general outburst of "revolt" in the wake of the rise of the extremist party and the great nationalist movement, Sri Aurobindo's activities turned more and more in this direction. At his brother Barin's suggestion, he agreed to start a weekly paper, *Yugantar*, in Bengali to preach open revolt and the absolute defiance of British rule.

In 1906 he joined hands with Bepin Chandra Pal in starting the *Bande Mataram*, an English daily which became the mouthpiece of the Nationalist Party. Sri Aurobindo had to establish and generalise the idea of independence in the mind of the Indian people and at the same time to push first a party and then the whole nation into an intense and organised political activity which would lead to the accomplishment of that ideal. Sri Aurobindo's first preoccupation now was to declare openly for complete and absolute independence as the aim of political action in India and to insist on this persistently in the pages of the journal; he was the first politician in India who had the courage to do this in public. The party took up the word *Swaraj* to express its own ideal of independence and it soon spread everywhere. The journal declared and developed a new political programme for the country as the programme of the Nationalist Party: non-cooperation, passive resistance, *Swadeshi*, boycott, national education, arbitration courts and other items of Sri Aurobindo's plan.

Bande Mataram began to circulate throughout India and fostered the growth of nationalism. It was almost unique in journalistic history in the influence it exercised in converting the mind of a people and preparing it for revolution.

Early in the morning on May 2, 1908, Sri Aurobindo was arrested on a charge of sedition and removed to the Alipore Jail. During the one year of trial in the Sessions Court at Alipore he spent almost all his time reading the Gita and the Upanishads and in intensive meditation and the practice of Yoga.

When he came out from jail, he found the whole political aspect of the country altered; most of the Nationalist leaders were in jail and there was a general disappointment and depression in the country. He determined to continue the struggle; he went to places in the districts to speak and began two weeklies, one in English (*Karmayogin*) and one in Bengali (*Dharma*). Sri Aurobindo began to consider how best to revive the National Movement under the changed circumstances. He saw, however, that he himself could not be the leader of such a movement.

Meanwhile the Government were determined to get rid of him as the biggest challenge to the success of their repressive policy. One night at the *Karmayogin* office Sri Aurobindo received information of the Government's intention to search the office and arrest him again. While considering what his line of action should be, he received a sudden command from above to go to Chandernagore in French India, and obeyed the command at once. At Chandernagore, after two months, there came to him a call to proceed to Pondicherry, which place he reached on April 4, 1910. He lived there for almost forty years — till he passed away on December 5, 1950.

From Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo at first kept up private communication with the revolutionary forces he had led. After some years he dropped this. His vision of the future grew clearer, he saw that the eventual independence of India was assured by the march of forces; there was no need of armed insurrection and that his own personal participation in politics would no longer be indispensable.

Although his retirement from political activity was complete, he kept a close watch on all that was happening in India and the world and actively intervened whenever necessary through his silent spiritual action. Twice, however, he found it advisable to take action of a public kind. The first time was in relation to the Second World War, when it appeared as if Hitler would crush all the forces opposed to him and Nazism would dominate the world. He declared himself publicly on the side of the Allies and made some financial contributions in answer to the appeal for funds. He also put his spiritual force behind the Allies. This he did because he saw that behind Hitler and Nazism were dark asuric forces and that their success would mean the enslavement of mankind, not only Europe but Asia and India, to the tyranny of evil. It was for this reason also that he publicly supported the Cripps' Mission. The second instance of his spiritual intervention was against Japanese aggression when it became evident that Japan intended to attack and even invade and conquer India.

In his message to the Indian nation on August 15, 1947, India's day of liberation and his own birthday, Sri

Aurobindo spoke of five dreams and of the Divine sanction for their realisation.

"The first of these dreams, was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India. India today is free but she has not achieved unity...it now seems probable that...a large and powerful, though not yet a complete union will be established. Let us hope that this may come about naturally.... But by whatever means, in whatever way, unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future.

"A second dream was the resurgence and liberation of the peoples of Asia and her return to her great role in the progress of human civilisation. Asia has arisen; large parts are now quite free or are at this moment being liberated.... There India has her part to play and has begun to play it with an energy and ability which...indicate the measure of her possibilities....

"The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way;... Here too India has begun to play a prominent part...and her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development.... For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement...without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure.... But an outward basis is not enough; there must grow up an international spirit and outlook.... Nationalism will have fulfilled itself and lost its militancy.... A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

"The fourth dream was the spiritual gift of India to the world. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

"The fifth and final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society. This is still a personal hope and an idea, an ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds.... Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must proceed through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India, and although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers."

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Although Sri Aurobindo began his Yoga in 1904, he already had had some spiritual experiences. This was before he knew anything about Yoga or even what it was. For example, a vast calm descended upon him when he stepped on Indian soil after his long absence, in fact with his first step on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay. This calm surrounded him and remained for many months afterwards. There were also the realisation of the vacant Infinite

while walking on the ridge of the Takht-i-Suleiman in Kashmir, the living presence of Kali in a shrine by the Narmada, the vision of the Godhead surging up from within when in danger of a carriage accident in Baroda. But these were inner experiences coming of themselves and with a sudden unexpectedness, not part of a *Sadhana*.

Sri Aurobindo started Yoga all by himself, that is, without a Guru. But there was no conflict between his Yoga and politics. Thus when he started Yoga, he carried on both without any idea of opposition between them. He wanted, however, to find a Guru. He once met a Naga *Sannyasi* and his belief in Yoga-power was confirmed when he saw the *Sannyasi* cure his brother Barin in almost a moment of a violent and clinging hill fever. Later he met Brahmananda and was greatly impressed by him. But he had no real helper or Guru in Yoga until he met Lele in Baroda in 1908. Meditating for only three days with Lele, he followed his instructions for silencing the mind and freeing it from the constant pressure of thought; he entered into an absolute and complete silence of the mind and indeed of the whole consciousness and in that silence had suddenly the enduring realisation of the indefinable *Brahman*, *Tat*, in which the whole universe seemed to be unreal and only That existed. This silence he kept for several months and it remained in essence always within him. After this all the mental activities, speech, writing, thought, will and other kindred movements, came to him from the same source — above the brain-mind; he had entered into the spiritual mind and what he afterwards called the overhead consciousness. This was his first major and fundamental Yogic realisation and experience and the true beginning and foundation of his Yoga.

Before coming to Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo had already had in full two of the four great realisations on which his Yoga and spiritual philosophy are founded. The first was the realisation of the silent, spaceless and timeless *Brahman* gained while meditating with Lele. The second was that of the cosmic consciousness and of the Divine as all beings and all that is, which happened in the Alipore Jail. The other two realisations were that of the Supreme Reality with the static and dynamic *Brahman* as its two aspects, and that of the higher planes of consciousness leading up to the Supermind. He accepted as the principle of his Sadhana to rely wholly on the Divine and His guidance alone both for Sadhana and outward action.

Thus gathering the essential elements of spiritual experience that are gained by the various paths of divine communion and spiritual realisation followed until now in India, he passed his life in Pondicherry in search of a more complete experience uniting and harmonising the two ends of existence, Spirit and Matter. Most ways of Yoga are paths to the Beyond leading to the Spirit and, in the end, away from life; Sri Aurobindo's rises to the Spirit to redescend with its gains, bringing the light and power and bliss of the Spirit into life to transform it.

The created world is not a mistake or a vanity and illusion

to be cast aside by the soul returning to Heaven or *Nirvana*, but the scene of a spiritual evolution by which out of this material inconscience is to be manifested progressively the Divine Consciousness in things. Mind is the highest term yet reached in the evolution but it is not the highest of which it is capable. There is above it an eternal Truth-Consciousness which is in its nature the self-aware and self-determining light and power of Divine Knowledge. It is only by the descent of this Truth-Consciousness that the perfection dreamed of by all that is highest in humanity can come. It is possible to rise to this power of light and bliss, discover one's true self, remain in constant union with the Divine. To realise this possibility has been the dynamic aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo never accepted Sannyasa as part of his Yoga. The Ashram at Pondicherry which grew around him and the Mother, is a sanctuary of peace where residents are not ascetics or Sannyasis but Sadhaks of a life based on spiritual realisation. The ideal is the attainment of the life divine here on this earth and in the earthly existence. This is man's evolutionary destiny according to Sri Aurobindo. The Ashram is running a number of institutions which aim to give form to this ideal. Notable among them are Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Sri Aurobindo Society, World Union and Auroville.

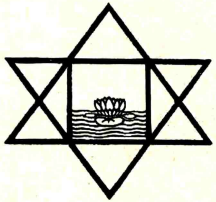
WRITINGS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo was essentially a poet, an intellectual and a writer before he took to Yoga. These natural powers achieved perfection and became vehicles of inspired and revelatory speech in the course of his Yogic life. In his hands the English language acquired new powers.

To the wealth of his early poetry, plays, essays and translations he added in Pondicherry his great works, *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, translations and interpretations of the Vedas and Upanishads, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, *The Psychology of Social Development* (*The Human Cycle*), *The Ideal of Human Unity*, and *The Future Poetry*. These works first appeared serially in the *Arya*, a philosophical monthly he edited from 1914 to 1920. Most of these writings were later revised and issued in book-form and comprise the core of his teaching and his global view of things.

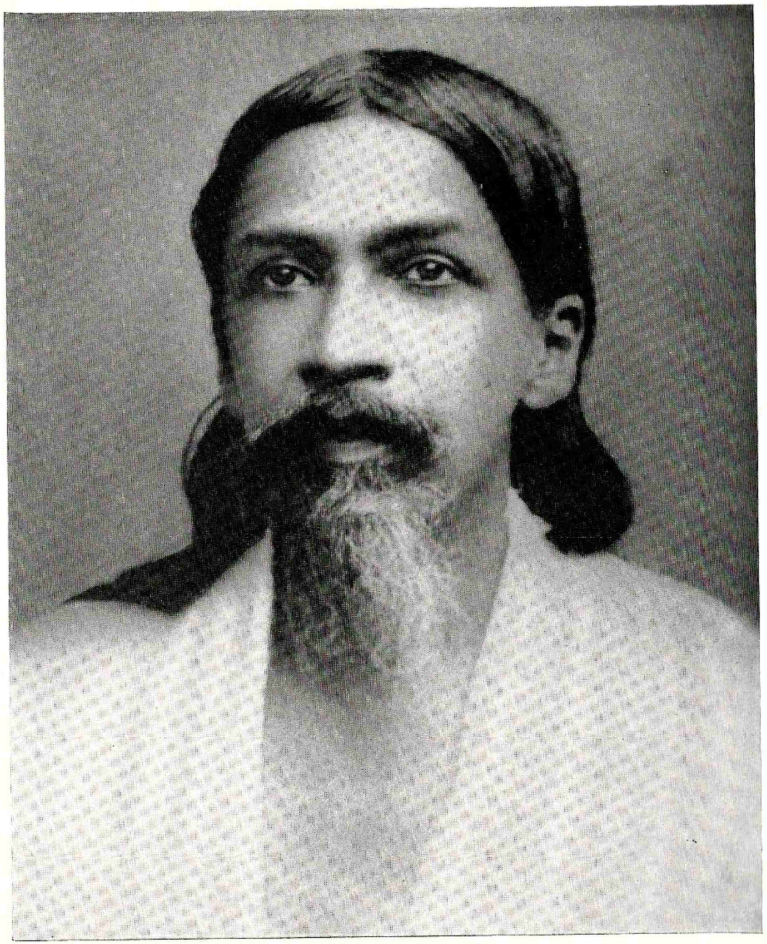
Apart from these he wrote a large number of letters to his disciples, guiding them in their spiritual life. These have been compiled and now form an important part of his message.

The last and most significant aspect of his work is his poetry. In Pondicherry he wrote a considerable number of short poems; however, his supreme creation is his epic poem, *Savitri*, over which he worked for more than forty years. In this creation of nearly 24,000 lines in blank verse, he gives us the full spectrum of his spiritual vision and experience, his world view in a language Mantric and revelatory. This is the longest poem ever written in English and, according to an American critic, it is "probably the greatest epic in the English language...a perfect cosmic poem".

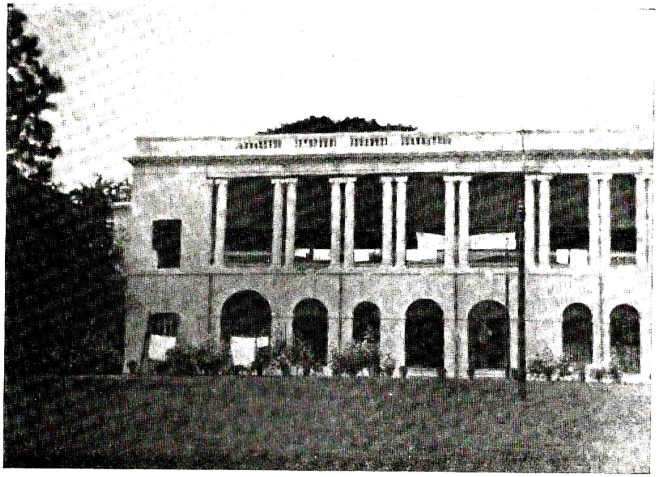


The Spirit is infinite, illimitable, eternal;
and infinite, illimitable, eternal is its stress towards manifestation,
filling endless space with innumerable existences.

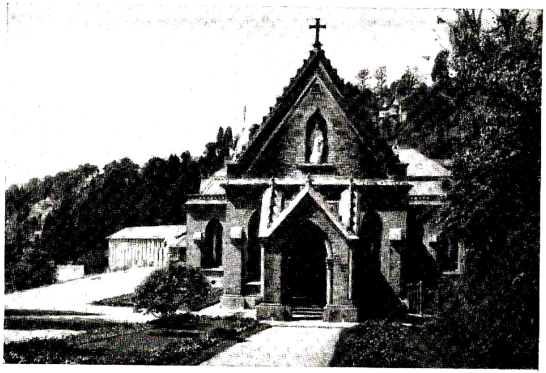
— Sri Aurobindo



SRI AUROBINDO
Birth Centenary 1872-1972

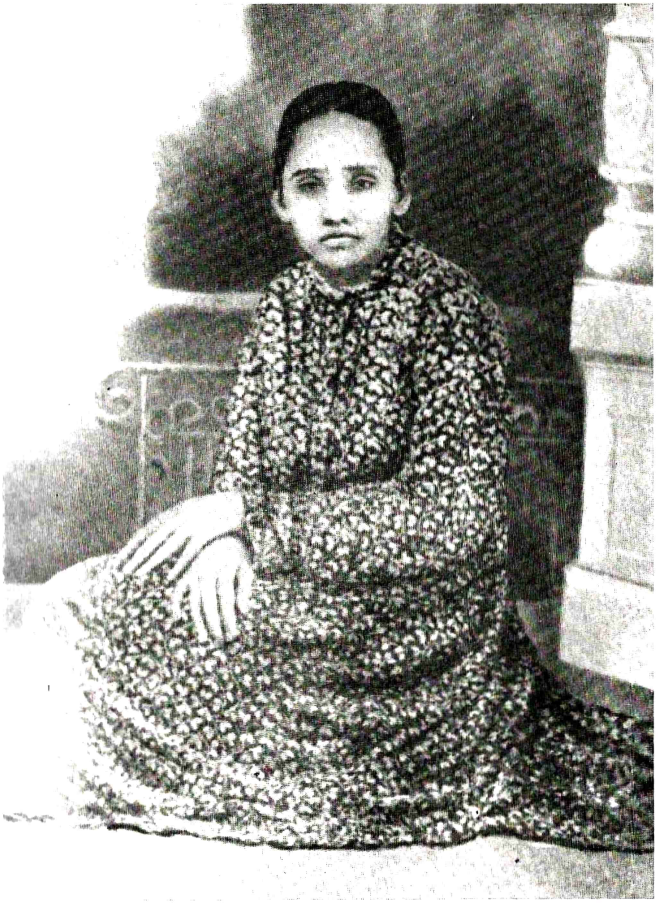


Theatre Road House in Calcutta where Sri Aurobindo lived as a child

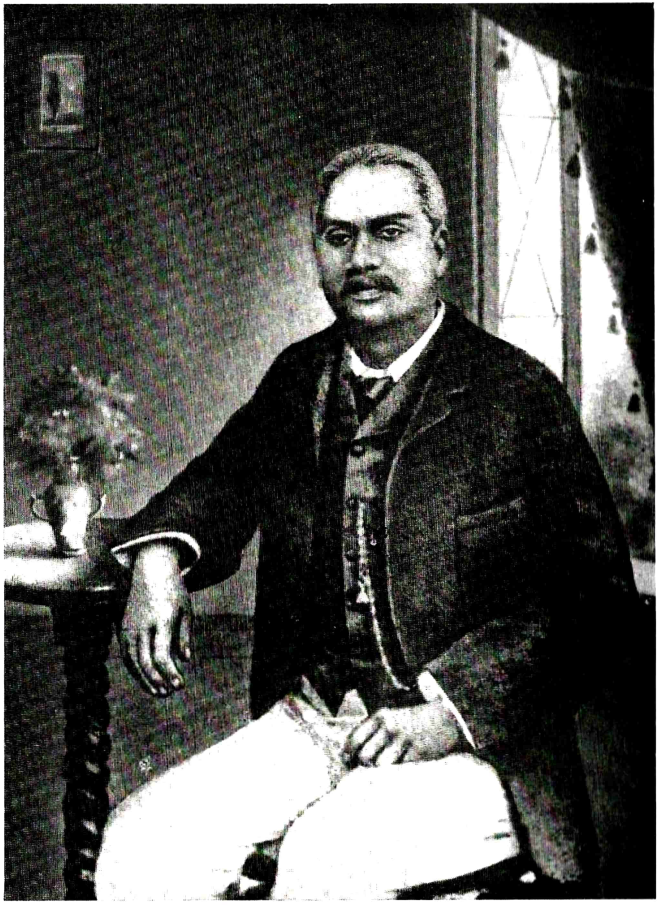


Loretto Convent School at Darjeeling

Sri Aurobindo with his parents, brothers and sister, 1879



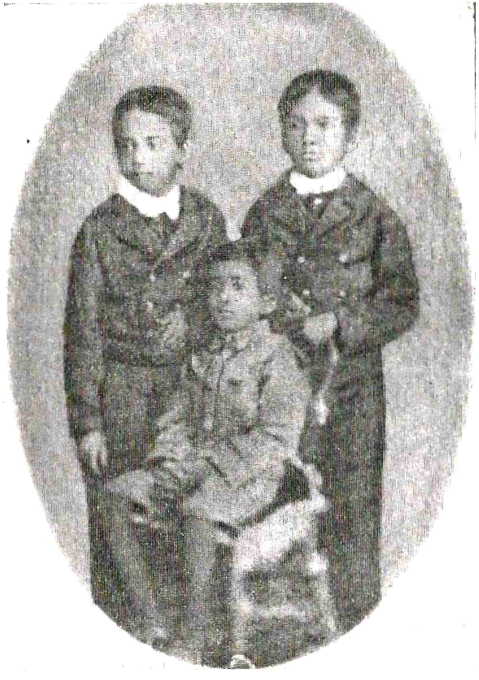
Swarnalata Ghose, mother of Sri Aurobindo



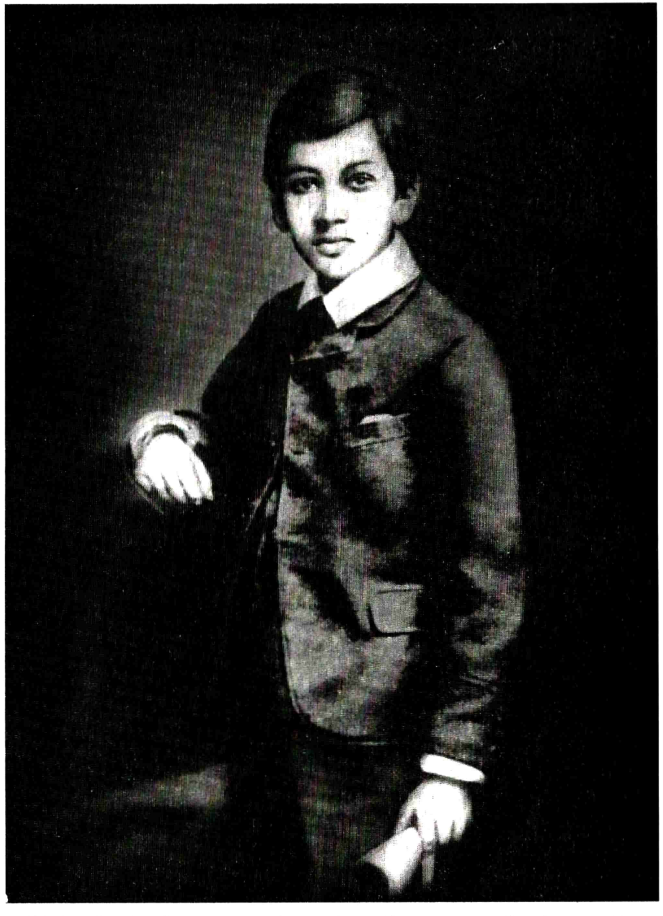
Dr. Krishna Dhan Ghose, father of Sri Aurobindo

House in Manchester where Sri Aurobindo lived with the Drewetts and received his early education, 1879-84

St. Paul's School, London, which Sri Aurobindo joined in 1884

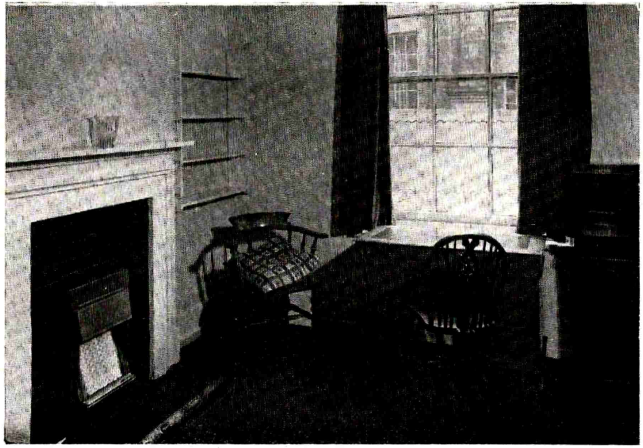


Sri Aurobindo with his brothers
Manmohan and Benoy Bhusan in England



Sri Aurobindo when he moved over from Manchester to London in 1884

Sri Aurobindo's residence at Cromwell Road, London, 1887-89



Sri Aurobindo's room at King's Lane, King's College, Cambridge, 1890-92

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE

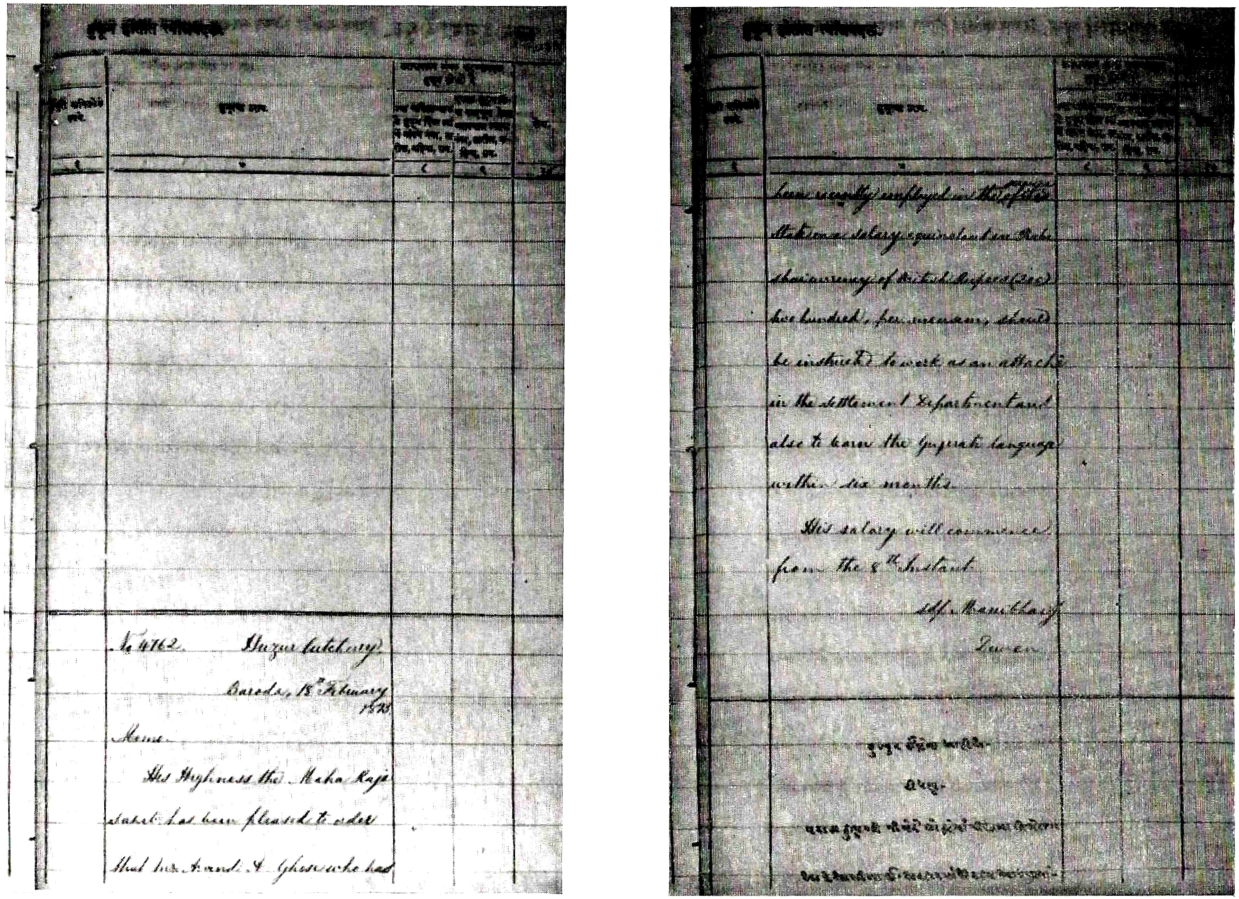
King's College, Cambridge
20th Nov., 1892

Dear Sir,

I am very sorry to hear what you tell me about Ghose, that he has been rejected in his final I.C.S. Examination for failure in riding. His conduct throughout his two years here was most exemplary. He had a foundation scholarship which he obtained (before passing his first I.C.S. Examination) by open competition, in classics. His pecuniary circumstances prevented him from resigning this, when he became a selected candidate, and the regulations of the scholarship obliged him to devote a great part of his time to classics, of course to some extent to the disadvantage of his I.C.S. studies. He performed his part of the bargain, as regards the College, most honourably, and took a high place in the 1st class of the classical Tripos at the end of the second year of his residence. He also obtained certain college prizes, showing command of English and literary ability. That a man should have been able to do this (which alone is quite enough for most undergraduates), and at the same time to keep up his I.C.S. work, proves very unusual industry and capacity. Besides his classical scholarship, he possessed a knowledge of English Literature far beyond the average of undergraduates and wrote a much better English style than most young Englishmen. That a man of this calibre should be lost to the Indian Government merely because he failed in sitting on a horse or did not keep an appointment, appears to me, I confess, a piece of official short-sightedness which it would be hard to beat.

G. M. PROTHERO

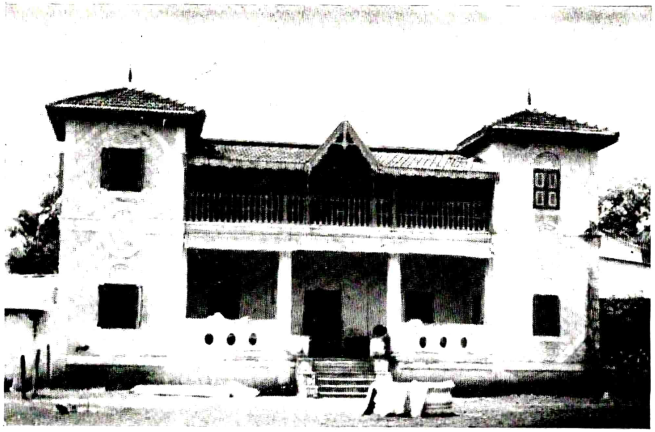
Sri Aurobindo as a student of King's College, Cambridge, 1890-92



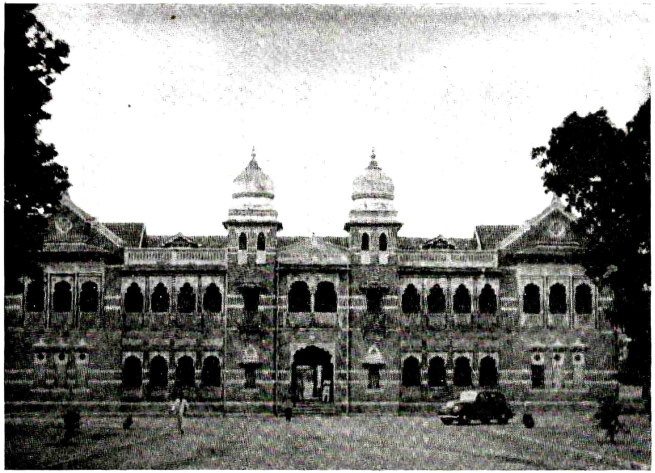
Record of Sri Aurobindo's appointment in Baroda State Service, February 18, 1893

Sri Aurobindo during early days of Baroda Service

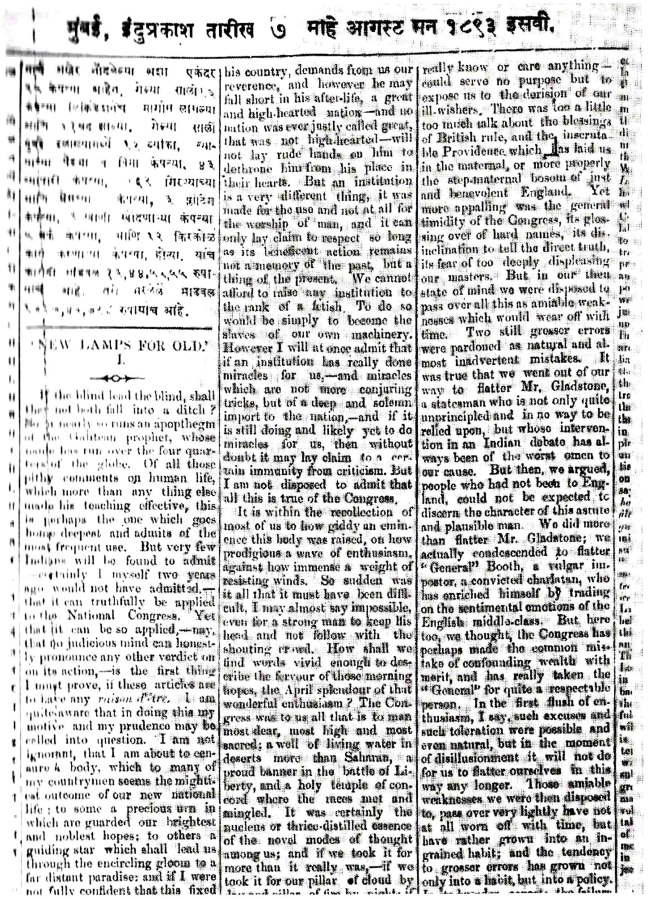
Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwar of Baroda



Sri Aurobindo's residence near the Race Course, Baroda



Indumati Palace, Baroda, Sri Aurobindo's place of work as Maharaja's Secretary



मुंबई, इंदुप्रकाश तारीख ७ माहे आगस्ट सन १८९३ इसवी.

'NEW LAMPS FOR OLD.'

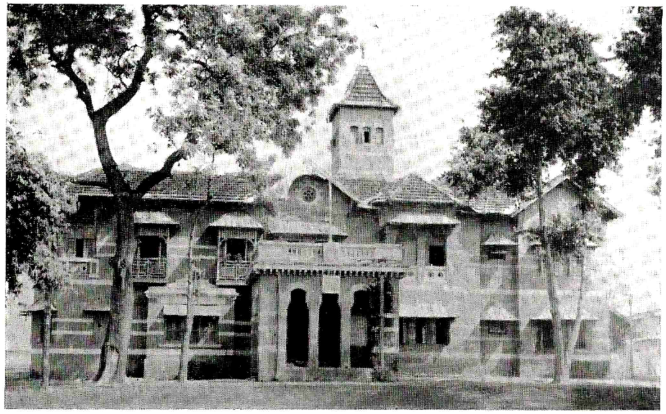
I.

If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into a ditch? This is nearly so runs an apopthegm of the Galilean prophet, whose words has run over the four quarters of the globe. Of all those pithy comments on human life, which more than any thing else made his teaching effective, this is perhaps the one which goes home deepest and admits of the most frequent use. But very few Indians will be found to admit —certainly I myself two years ago would not have admitted,—that it can truthfully be applied to the National Congress. Yet that it can be so applied,—nay, that no judicious mind can honestly pronounce any other verdict on its action,—is the first thing I must prove, if these articles are to have any *raison d'etre*. I am quite aware that in doing this my motive and my prudence may be called into question. I am not ignorant, that I am about to censure a body, which to many of my countrymen seems the mightiest outcome of our new national life; to some a precious urn in which are guarded our brightest and noblest hopes; to others a guiding star which shall lead us through the encircling gloom to a far distant paradise: and if I were not fully confident that this fixed his country, demands from us our reverence, and however he may fall short in his after-life, a great and high-hearted nation—and no nation was ever justly called great, that was not high-hearted—will not lay rude hands on him to dethrone him from his place in their hearts. But an institution is a very different thing, it was made for the use and not at all for the worship of man, and it can only lay claim to respect so long as its beneficent action remains not a memory of the past, but a thing of the present. We cannot afford to raise any institution to the rank of a fetish. To do so would be simply to become the slaves of our own machinery. However I will at once admit that if an institution has really done miracles for us,—and miracles which are not more conjuring tricks, but of a deep and solemn import to the nation,—and if it is still doing and likely yet to do miracles for us, then without doubt it may lay claim to a certain immunity from criticism. But I am not disposed to admit that all this is true of the Congress.

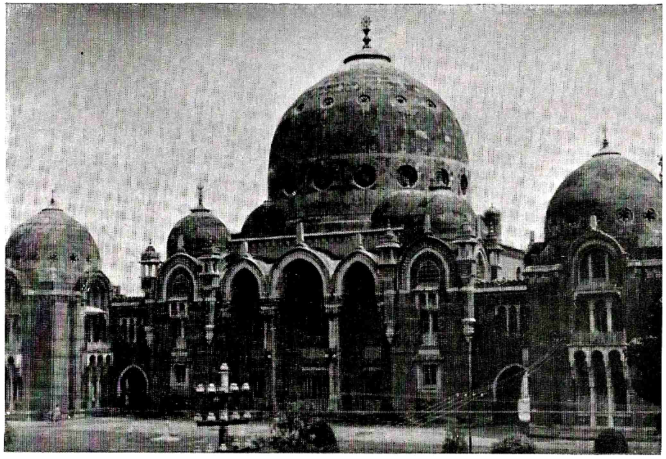
It is within the recollection of most of us to how giddy an eminence this body was raised, on how prodigious a wave of enthusiasm, against how immense a weight of resisting winds. So sudden was it all that it must have been difficult, I may almost say impossible, even for a strong man to keep his head and not follow with the shouting crowd. How shall we find words vivid enough to describe the fervour of those morning hopes, the April splendour of that wonderful enthusiasm? The Congress was to us all that is to man most dear, most high and most sacred; a well of living water in deserts more than Sahraan, a proud banner in the battle of Liberty, and a holy temple of concord where the races met and mingled. It was certainly the nucleus or thrice-distilled essence of the novel modes of thought among us; and if we took it for more than it really was,—if we took it for our pillar of cloud by really know or care anything—could serve no purpose but to expose us to the derision of our ill-wishers. There was too a little too much talk about the blessings of British rule, and the inscrutable Providence which has laid us in the maternal, or more properly the step-maternal bosom of just and benevolent England. Yet more appalling was the general timidity of the Congress, its glossing over of hard names, its disinclination to tell the direct truth, its fear of too deeply displeasing our masters. But in our then state of mind we were disposed to pass over all this as amiable weaknesses which would wear off with time. Two still grosser errors were pardoned as natural and almost inadvertent mistakes. It was true that we went out of our way to flatter Mr. Gladstone, a statesman who is not only quite unprincipled and in no way to be relied upon, but whose intervention in an Indian debate has always been of the worst omen to our cause. But then, we argued, people who had not been to England, could not be expected to discern the character of this astute and plausible man. We did more than flatter Mr. Gladstone; we actually condescended to flatter "General" Booth, a vulgar impostor, a convicted charlatan, who has enriched himself by trading on the sentimental emotions of the English middle-class. But here too, we thought, the Congress has perhaps made the common mistake of confounding wealth with merit, and has really taken the "General" for quite a respectable person. In the first flush of enthusiasm, I say, such excuses and such toleration were possible and even natural, but in the moment of disillusionment it will not do for us to flatter ourselves in this way any longer. Those amiable weaknesses we were then disposed to, pass over very lightly have not at all worn off with time, but have rather grown into an ingrained habit; and the tendency to grosser errors has grown not only into a habit, but into a policy.

Facsimile of "New Lamps for Old", 1893

K. G. Deshpande, Sri Aurobindo's Cambridge friend and Editor, Indu Prakash



Khasirao Jadhav's House where Sri Aurobindo lived at Baroda

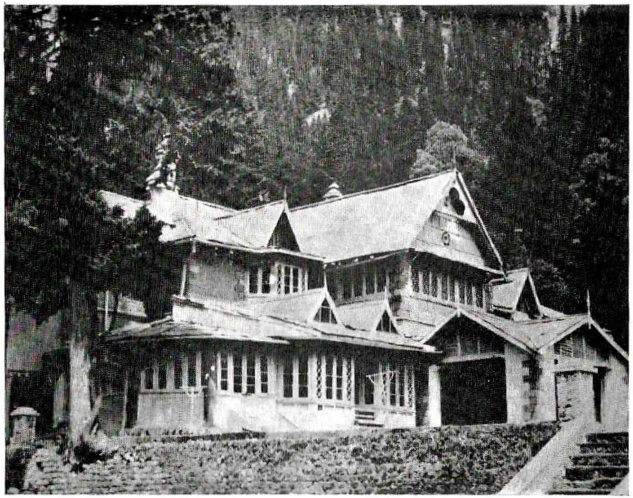


Baroda College

Sri Aurobindo, 1901

Sri Aurobindo with the students of his French Class, Baroda

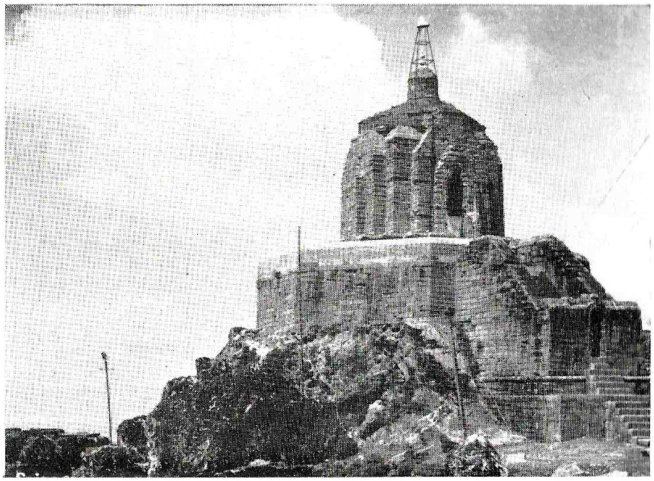
Sri Aurobindo as Professor, 1904



The house at Nainital where Sri Aurobindo stayed with his wife in 1901

Sri Aurobindo with his wife Mrinalini Devi, 1901

Sri Aurobindo (seated right) in Kashmir with other Baroda State Officers, 1903



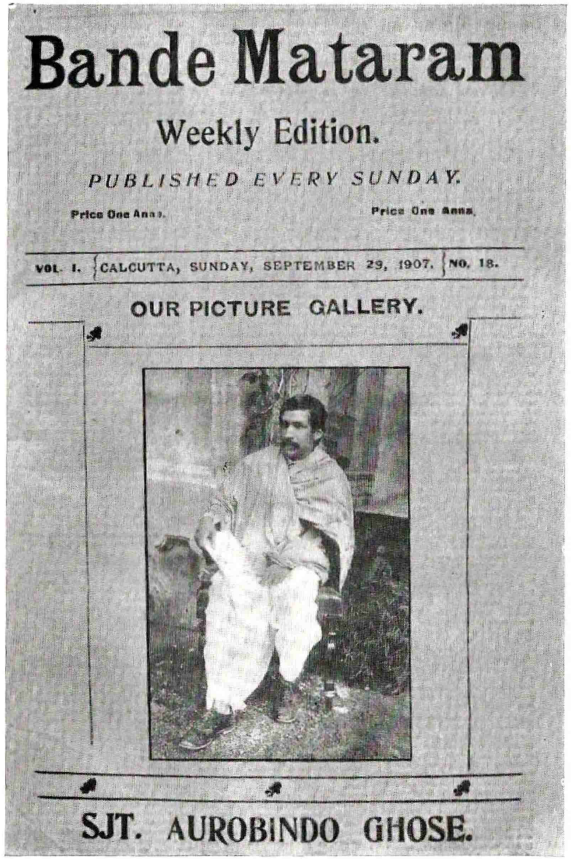
Takht-e-Suleman, Shankaracharya's Temple, Kashmir where
Sri Aurobindo had a spiritual experience in 1903

Proclamation.

Whereas the Government has thought fit to effectuate the Partition of Bengal in spite of the universal protest of the Bengali nation, we hereby pledge and proclaim that we as a people shall do everything in our power to counteract the evil effects of the dismemberment of our Province and to maintain the integrity of our race. So help us God.

Dated this First day of November in the year Nineteen Hundred and Five and given under

"The National Proclamation" which used to be read at all meetings during the anti-partition days in Bengal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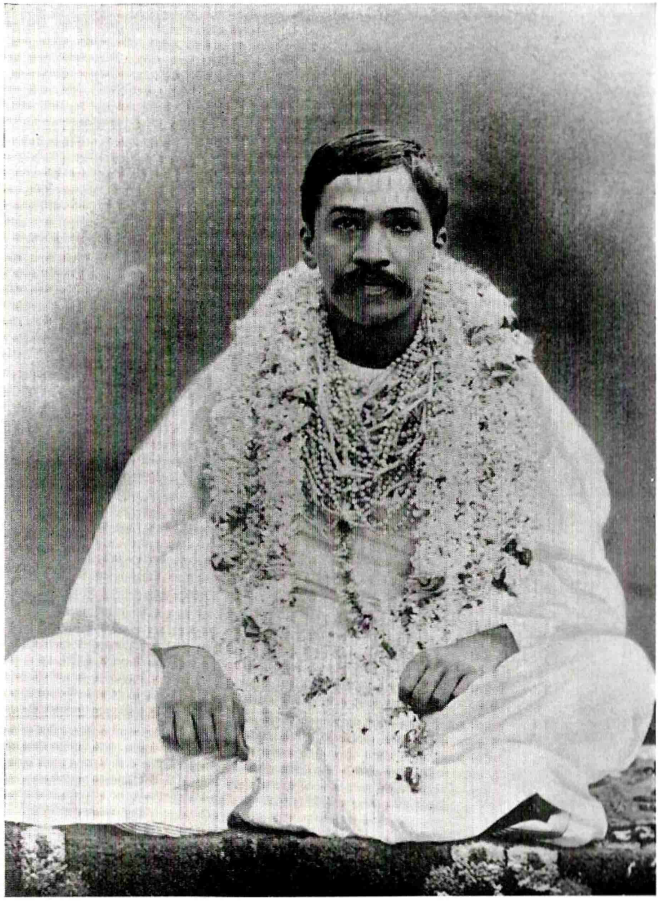
PUBLISHED EVERY SUNDAY.
Price One Anna. Price One Anna.
VOL. I. CALCUTTA, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1907. NO. 18.
OUR PICTURE GALLERY.
SJT. AUROBINDO GHOSE.

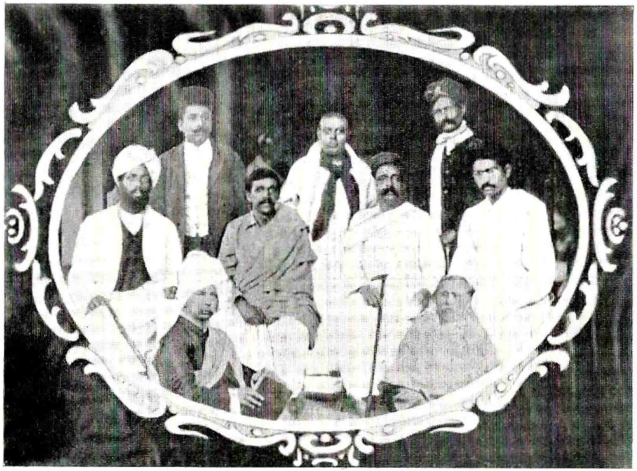
Sri Aurobindo after his first prosecution, 1907

Raja Subodh Mullick's house, Calcutta, where Sri Aurobindo stayed after his return to Calcutta in 1906



After resigning the Principalship of the National College, Calcutta, August 1907

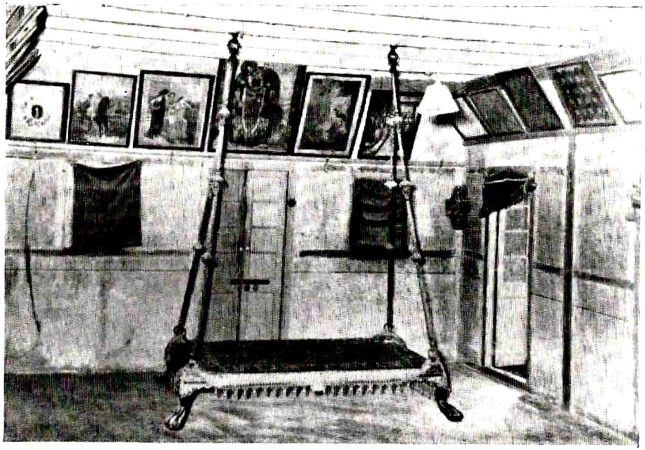
Sri Aurobindo presiding over a meeting of the Nationalists,
Surat, December 1907



Sri Aurobindo with Tilak and other Nationalists, December 1907

Sri Aurobindo at Baroda in 1908 after the Surat Congress

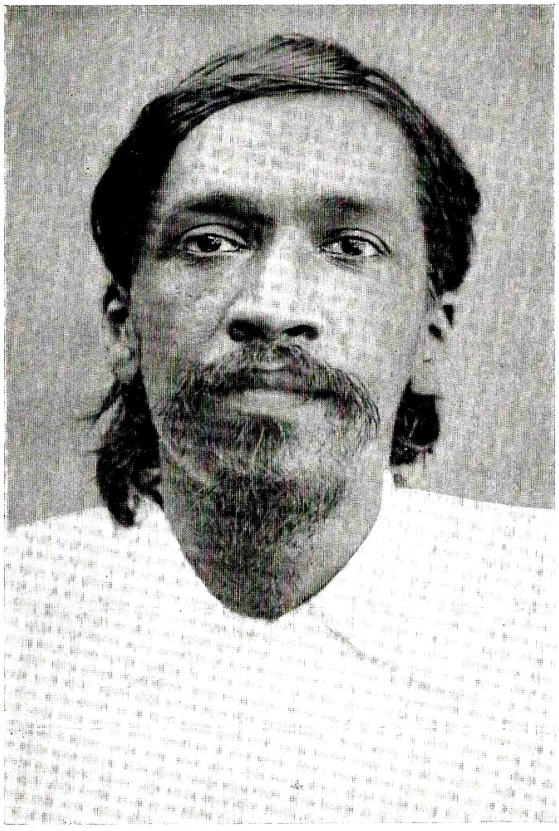
Majumdar's house, Baroda, where Sri Aurobindo had his first major spiritual realisation, while following Lele's instructions



The room in Majumdar's house where Sri Aurobindo sat for meditation with Lele, January 1908

FIRST SPIRITUAL REALISATION

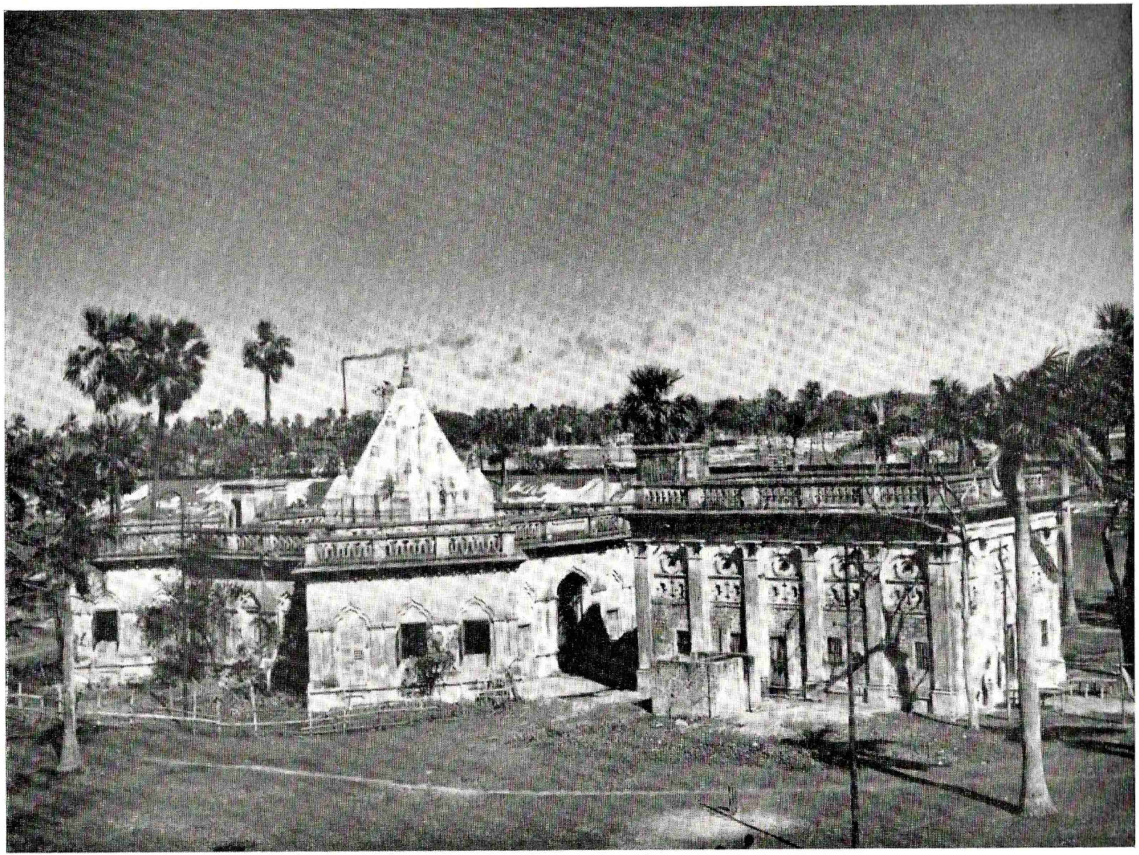
We sat together and I followed with an absolute fidelity what he instructed me to do, not myself in the least understanding where he was leading me or where I was myself going. The first result was a series of tremendously powerful experiences and radical changes of consciousness which he had never intended--for they were Advaitic and Vedantic and he was against Advaita Vedanta—and which were quite contrary to my own ideas, for they made me see with a stupendous intensity the world as a cinematographic play of vacant forms in the impersonal universality of the Absolute Brahman. The final upshot was that he was made by a Voice within him to hand me over to the Divine within me enjoining an absolute surrender to its will—a principle or rather a seed force to which I kept unswervingly and increasingly till it led me through all the mazes of an incalculable Yogic development bound by no single rule or style or dogma or Shastra to where and what I am now and towards what shall be hereafter.



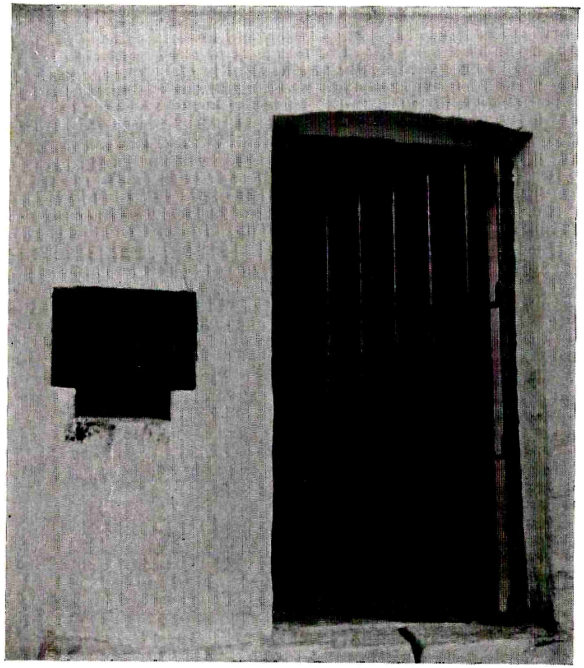
When I was arrested and hurried to the Lal Bazar hajat I was shaken in faith for a while, for I could not look into the heart of His intention. Therefore I faltered for a moment and cried out in my heart to Him, "What is this that has happened to me? I believed that I had a mission to work for the people of my country and until that work was done, I should have Thy protection. Why then am I here and on such a charge?" A day passed and a second day and a third, when a voice came to me from within, "Wait and see." Then I grew calm and waited,...

Sri Aurobindo after his arrest in May 1908

Some of the other revolutionaries accused in the Alipore Conspiracy Case
Top: Upendra Nath Banerjee, Purna Chandra Sen, Nolini Kanta Gupta, Bibhuti Bhusan Sircar
Bottom: Barindra Kumar Ghose, Narendra Nath Nandi, Ullaskar Dutt, Narendra Nath Bakshi



Muraripukur Garden-house, where bombs were made by Sri Aurobindo's brother Barindra and others

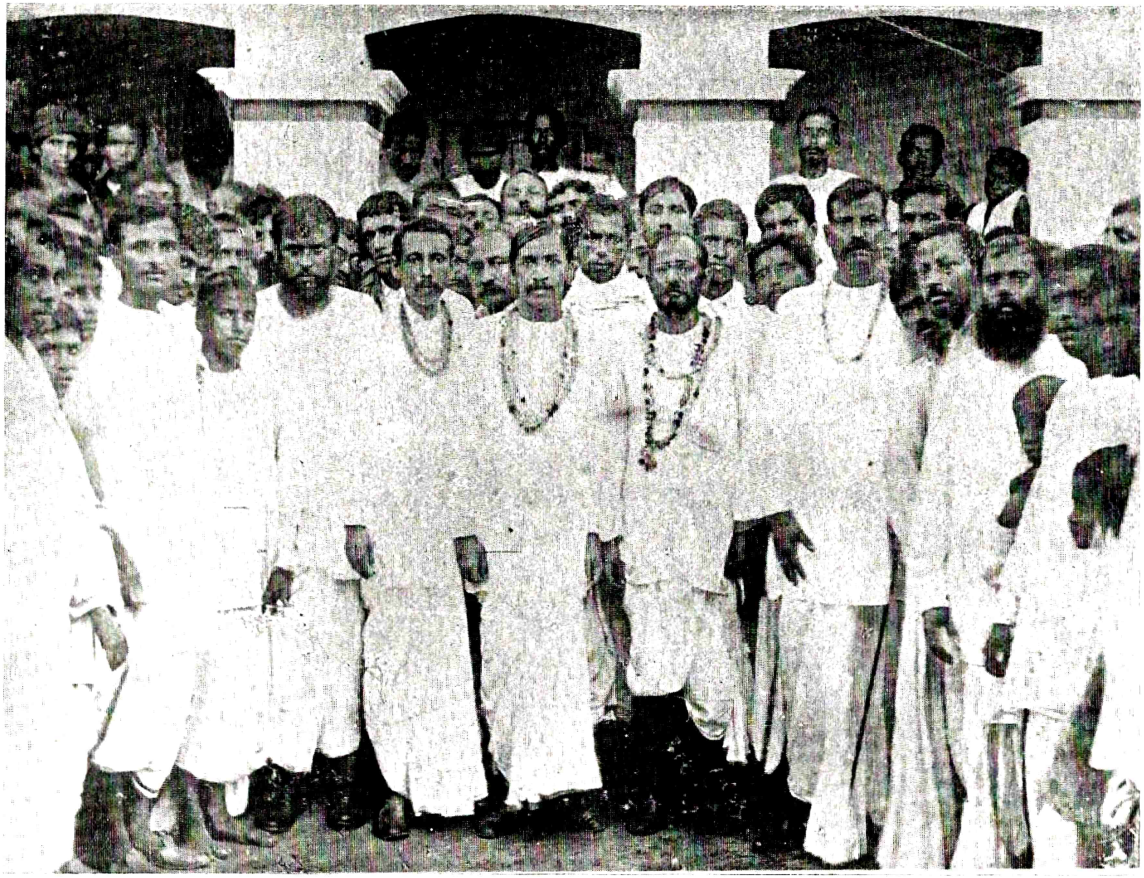


The cell where Sri Aurobindo was in solitary confinement during the Alipore Conspiracy Case

GOD REALISATION IN JAIL

Day after day, He (God) showed me His wonders .... I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned, no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell, but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me his shade .... I looked and it was not the Magistrate whom I saw, it was Vasudeva, it was Narayana who was sitting there on the bench. I looked at the Prosecuting Counsel and it was not the Counsel for the Prosecution that I saw; it was Sri Krishna who sat there, it was my Lover and Friend who sat there and smiled.... This was the first use of deeper vision He gave me. I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers, and as I looked at them I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in these darkened souls and misused bodies. Among these thieves and dacoits there were many who put me to shame by their sympathy, their kindness....

Sri Aurobindo (extreme right) with Bepin Chandra Pal (extreme left) at Uttarpara meeting, 1908



Sri Aurobindo at Sylhet with Kamini Kumar Chanda (to his left) and Promode Chandra Dutta (to his right)

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A WEEKLY REVIEW

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Contributors:—Sj. Aurobindo Ghose and others.

OFFICE:—14 SHAM BAZAR STREET,
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Facsimile of Karmayogin cover page

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ধর্ম্ম

নগদ মূল্য দুই পয়সা মাত্র।

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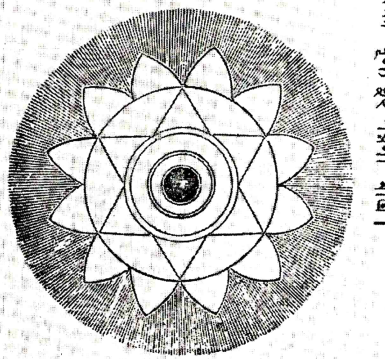


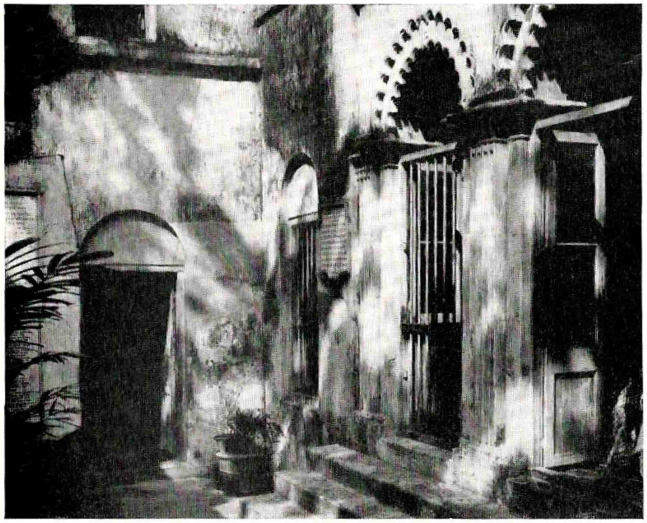
সাপ্তাহিক পত্র।

সম্পাদক—শ্রীযুক্ত অরবিন্দ ঘোষ।

১ম বর্ষ] সোমবার ১৮ই মাঘ ১৩১৬ সাল। [২২শ সংখ্যা।

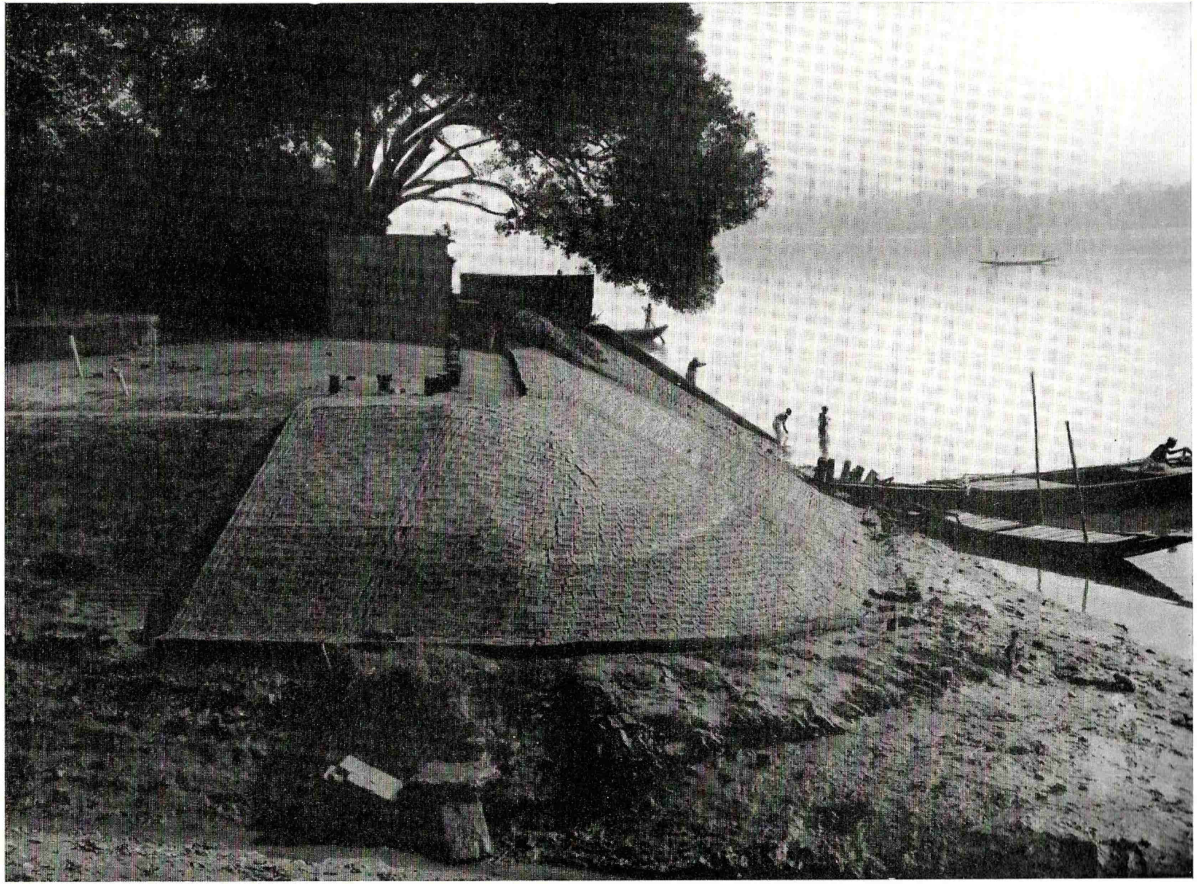
যদা যদা হি ধর্ম্মস্য গ্লানির্ভবতি ভারত।
অভ্যুত্থানমধর্ম্মস্য তদাত্মানং সৃজাম্যহং॥
পরিত্রাণায় সাধূনাং বিনাশায় চ দুষ্কৃতাং।
ধর্ম্মসংস্থাপনার্থায় সম্ভবামি যুগে যুগে॥ গীতা

Facsimile of Dharma cover page



Motilal Roy's house which was Sri Aurobindo's secret residence in Chandernagore, February - March 1910

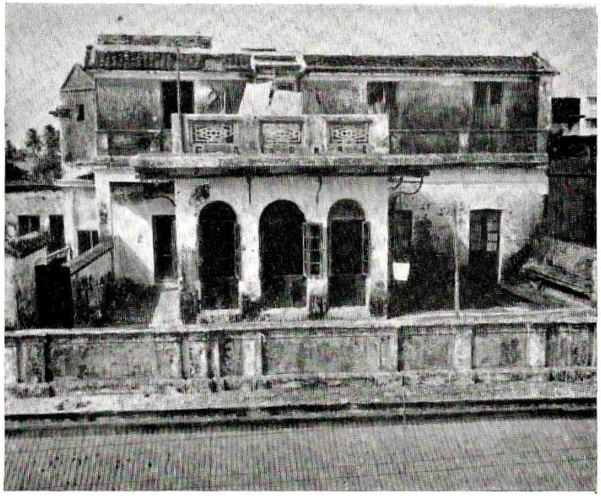
Sri Aurobindo one night at the Karmayogin office received information of the Government's intention to search the office and arrest him. While considering what should be his attitude, he received a sudden command from above to go to Chandernagore in French India. He obeyed the command at once, for it was now his rule to move only as he was moved by the divine guidance and never to resist and depart from it; he did not stay to consult with anyone, but in ten minutes was at the river ghat and in a boat plying on the Ganges; in a few hours he was at Chandernagore where he went into secret residence. At Chandernagore he plunged entirely into solitary meditation and ceased all other activity. Then there came to him a call to proceed to Pondicherry. A boat manned by some young revolutionaries of Uttarpara took him to Calcutta; there he boarded the Dupleix and reached Pondicherry on April 4, 1910.



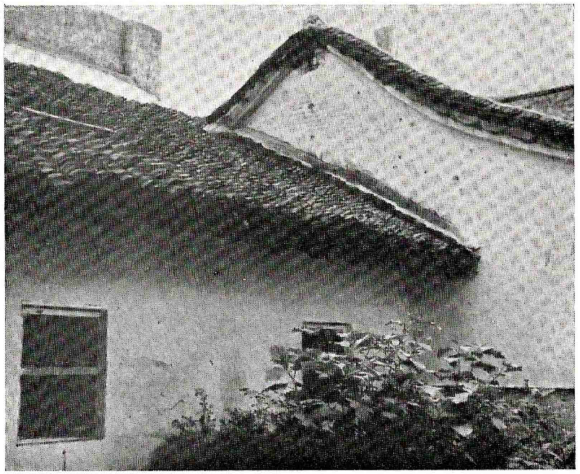
Chandernagore ghat from where Sri Aurobindo left for Pondicherry via Calcutta

Pondicherry Coast

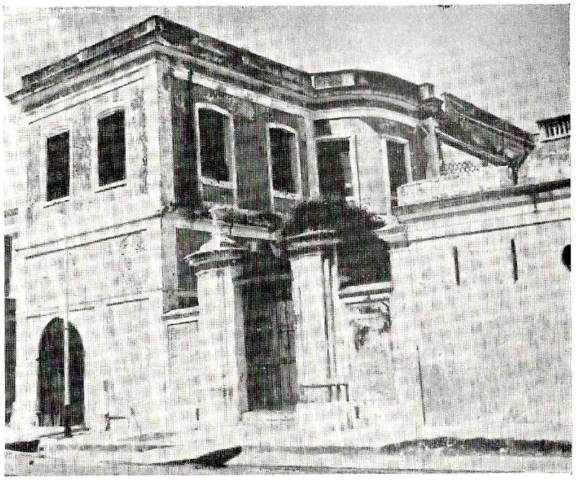
SRI AUROBINDO LANDED IN PONDICHERRY BY S. S. DUPLEIX, ON APRIL 4, 1910



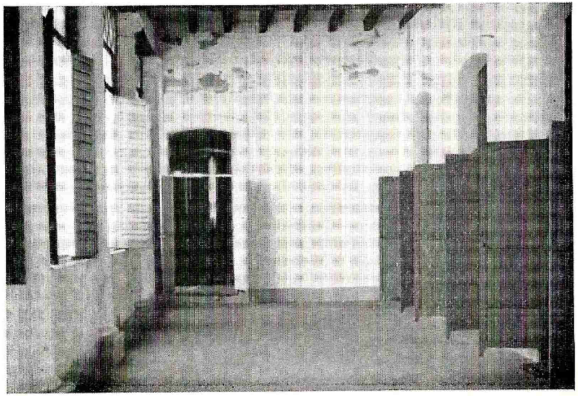
Shanker Chetty house (April 1910 to October 1910)



Sunder Chetty house (October 1910 to April 1911)



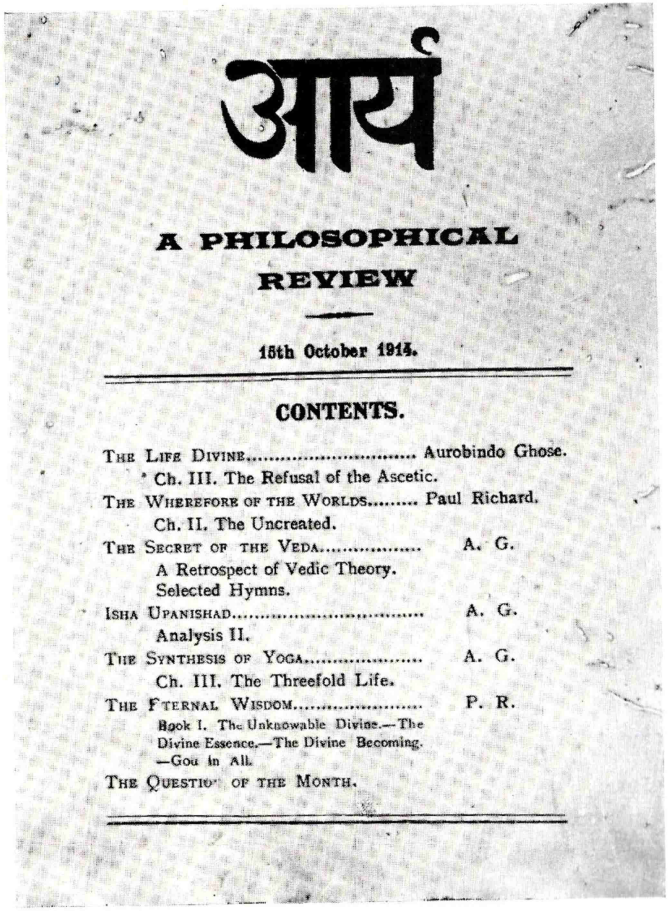
Raghav Chetty house (April 1911 to April 1913)



"Guest House" (April 1913 to October 1922)

HOUSES OCCUPIED BY SRI AUROBINDO DURING HIS EARLY DAYS AT PONDICHERRY

Sri Aurobindo writing for the *Arya*, 1914-21



आर्य

A PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW

15th October 1915.

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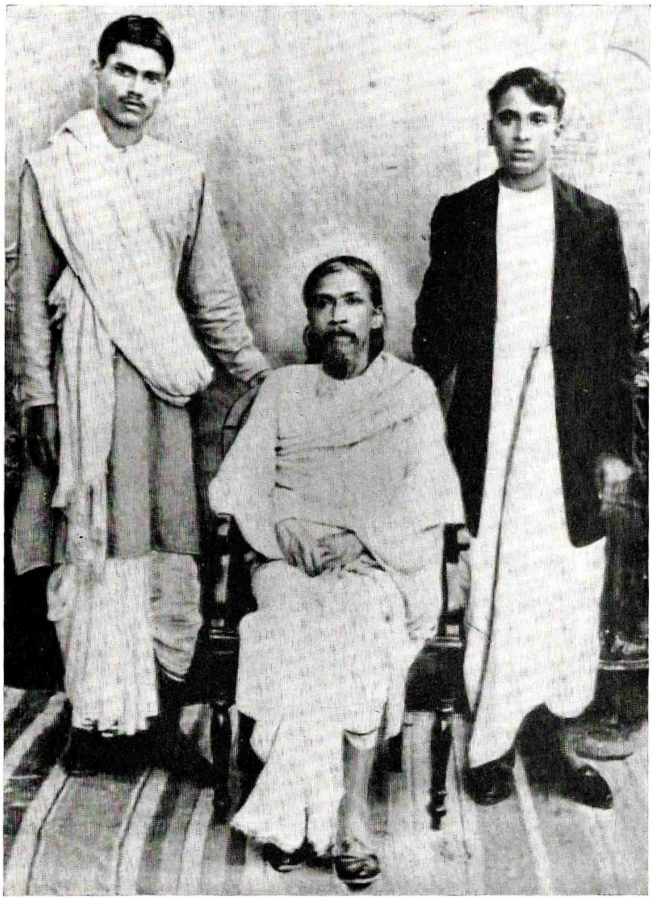
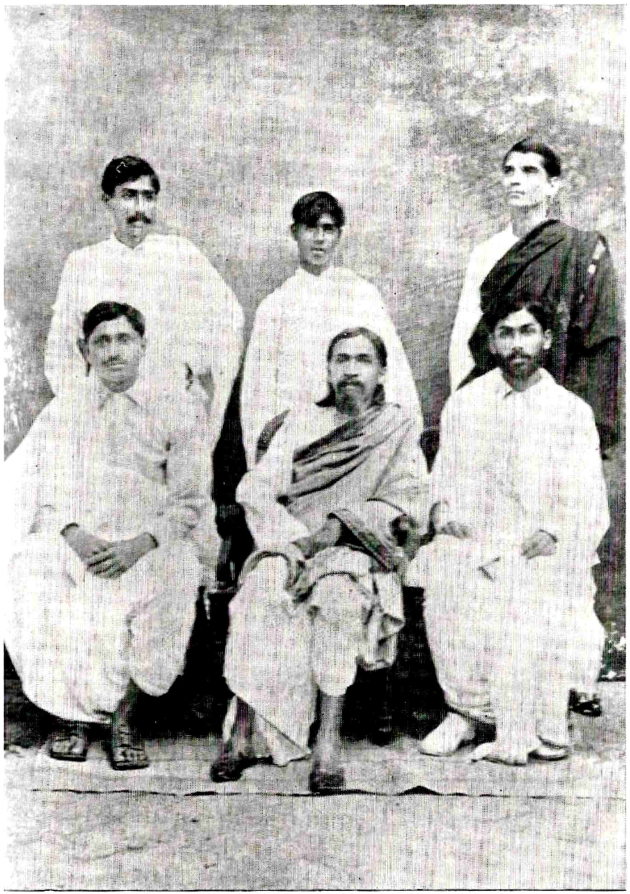
Facsimile of the opening page of the *Arya*



Sri Aurobindo with two disciples, 1918-20

Sri Aurobindo, 1918-20



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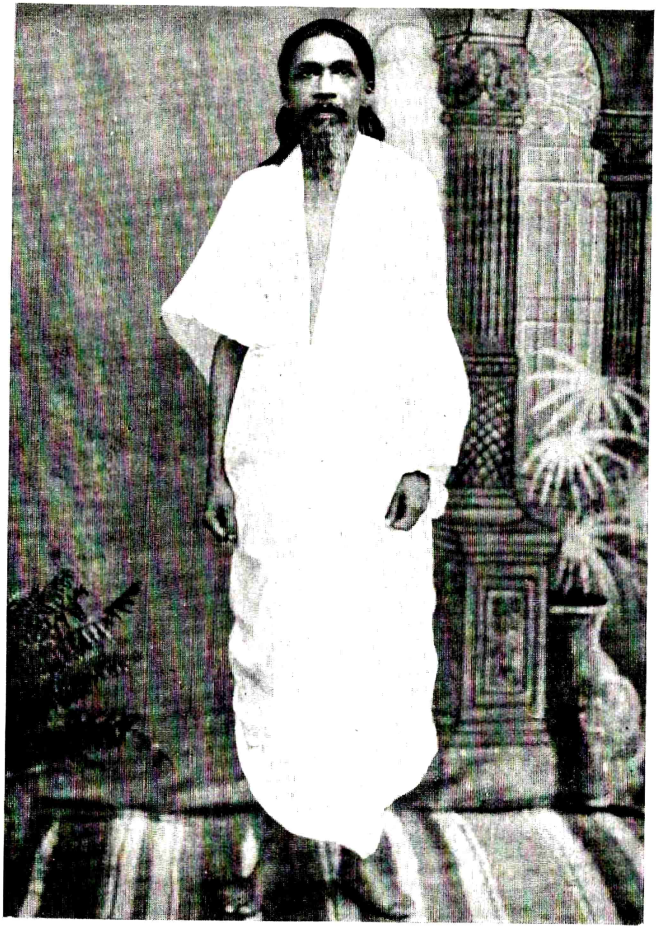
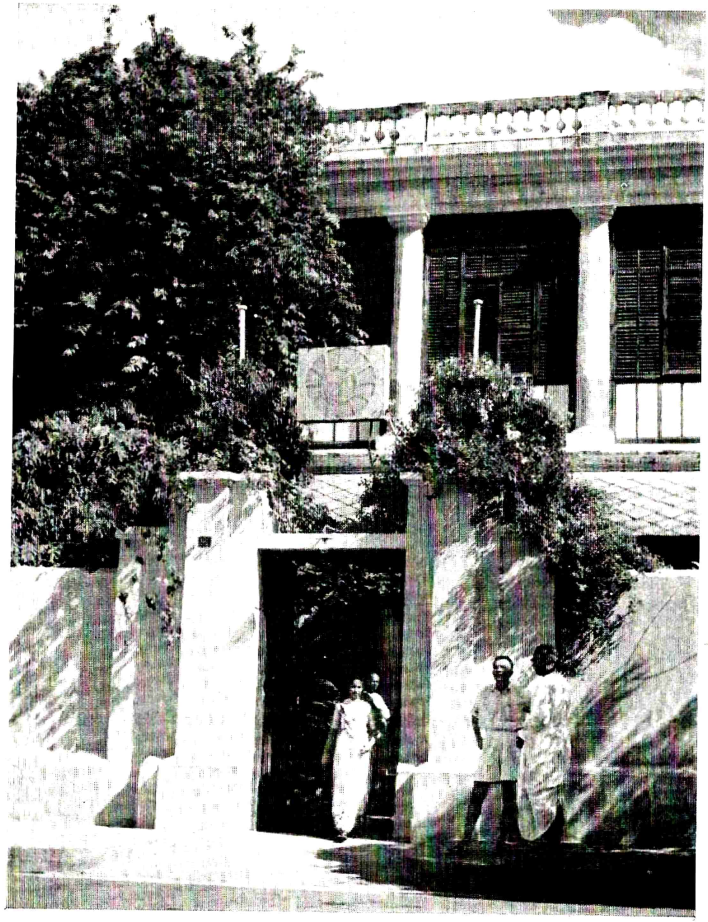
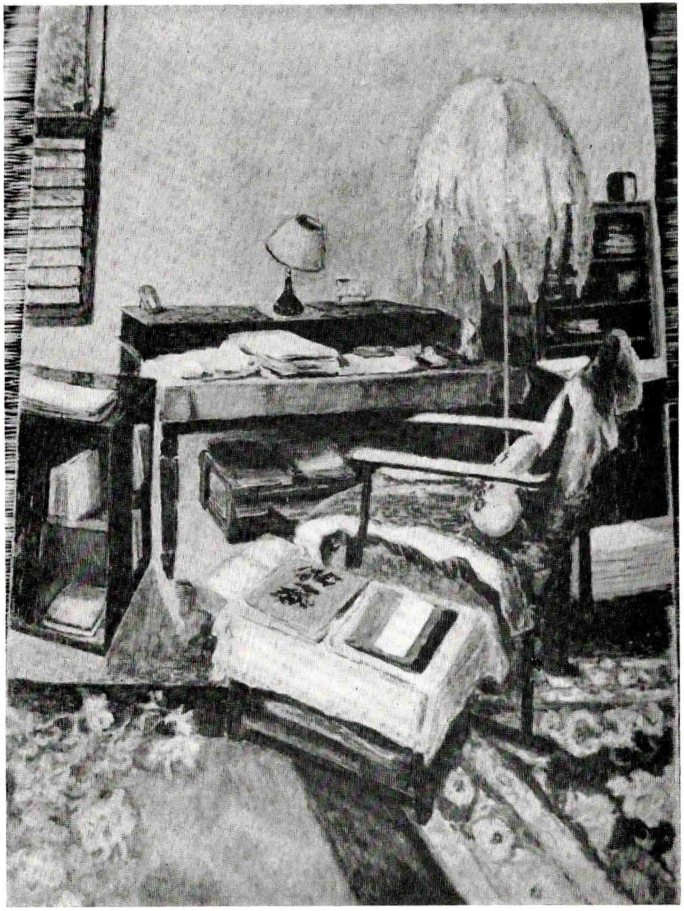
Sri Aurobindo, 1918-20



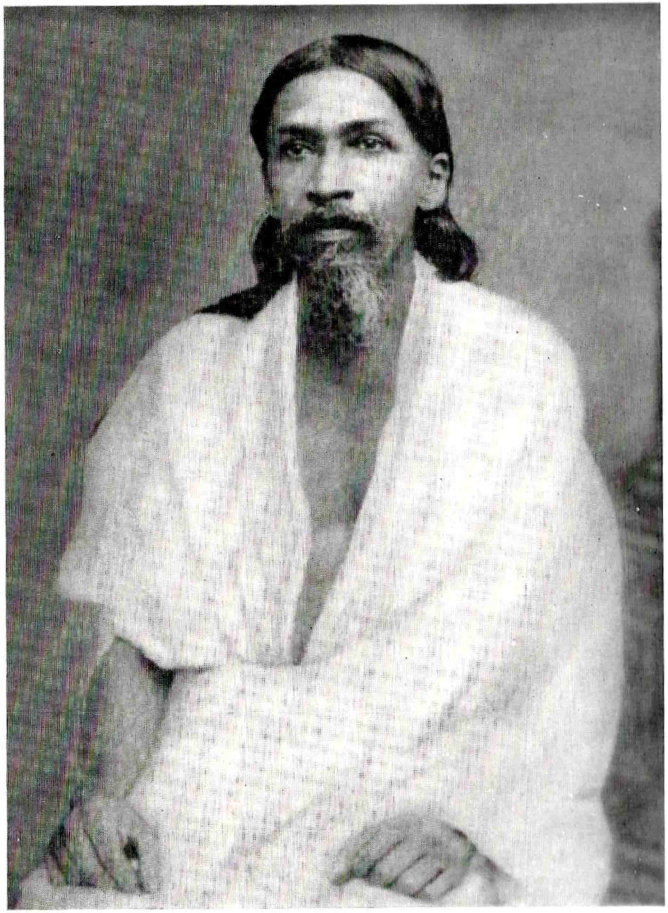
Sri Aurobindo, 1918-20



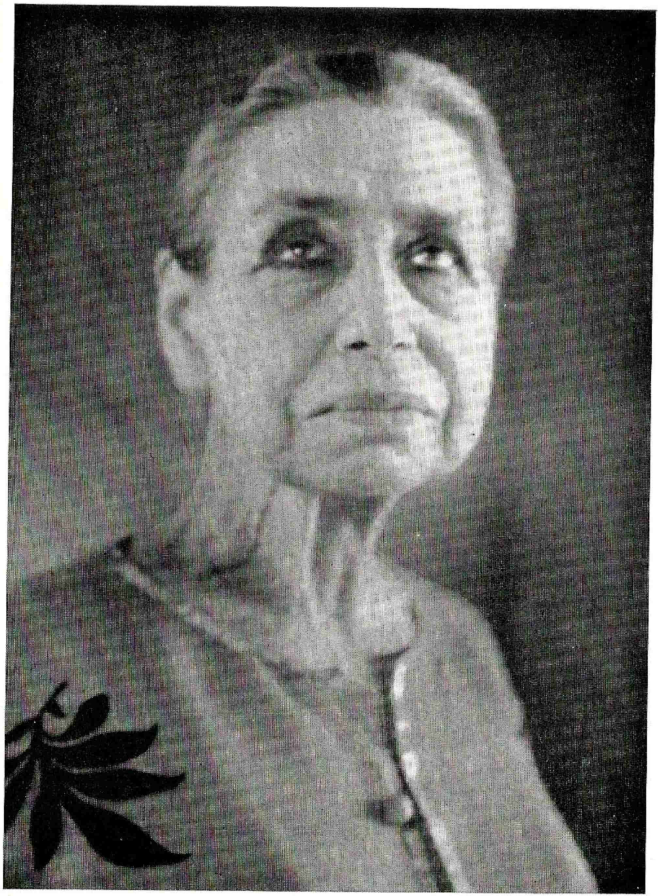
Sri Aurobindo Ashram, main entrance



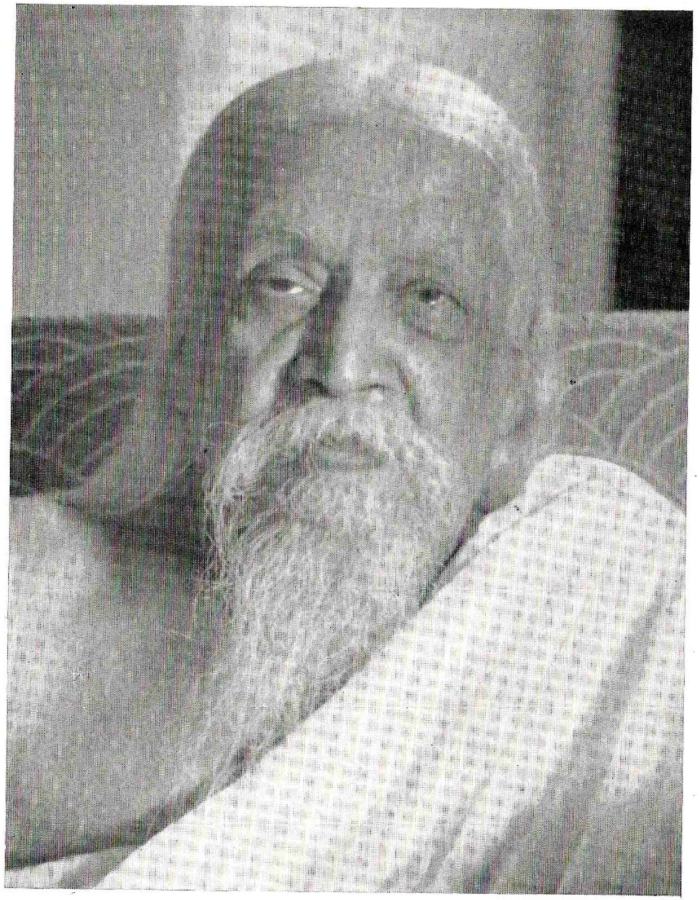
A painting of Sri Aurobindo's desk



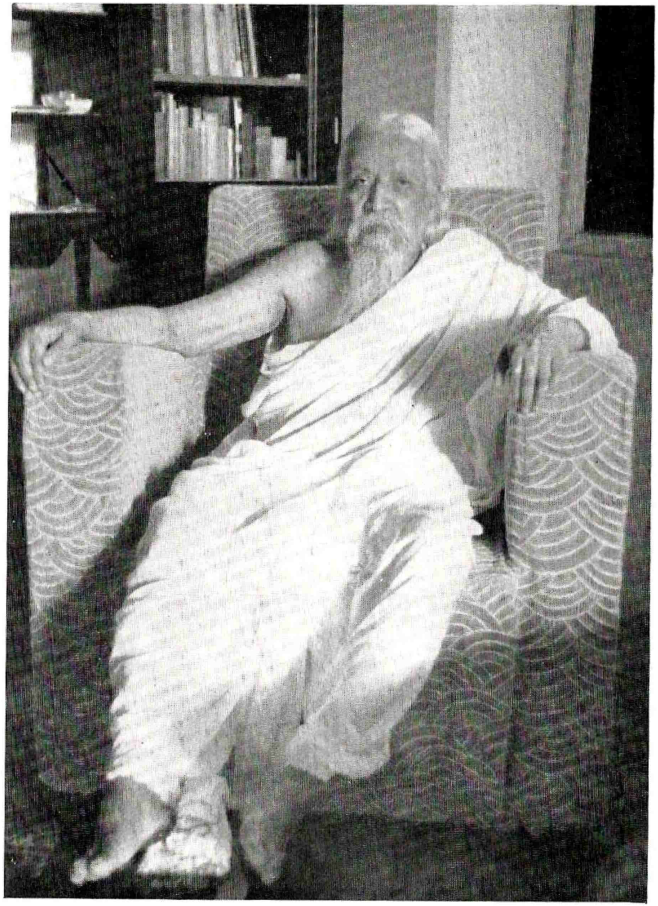
Sri Aurobindo, 1918-20



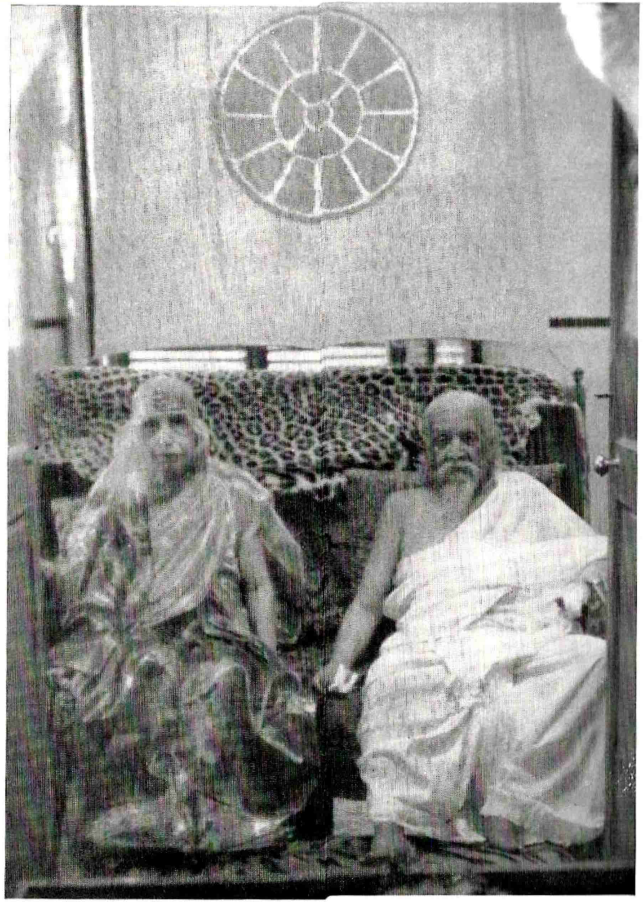
The Mother, 1964



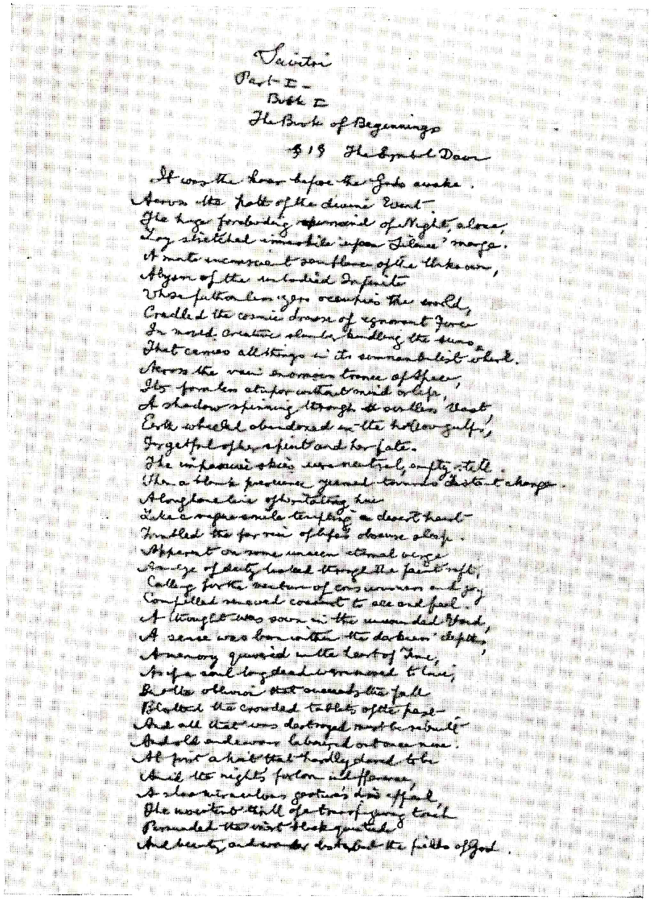
Sri Aurobindo, 1950



Sri Aurobindo, 1950



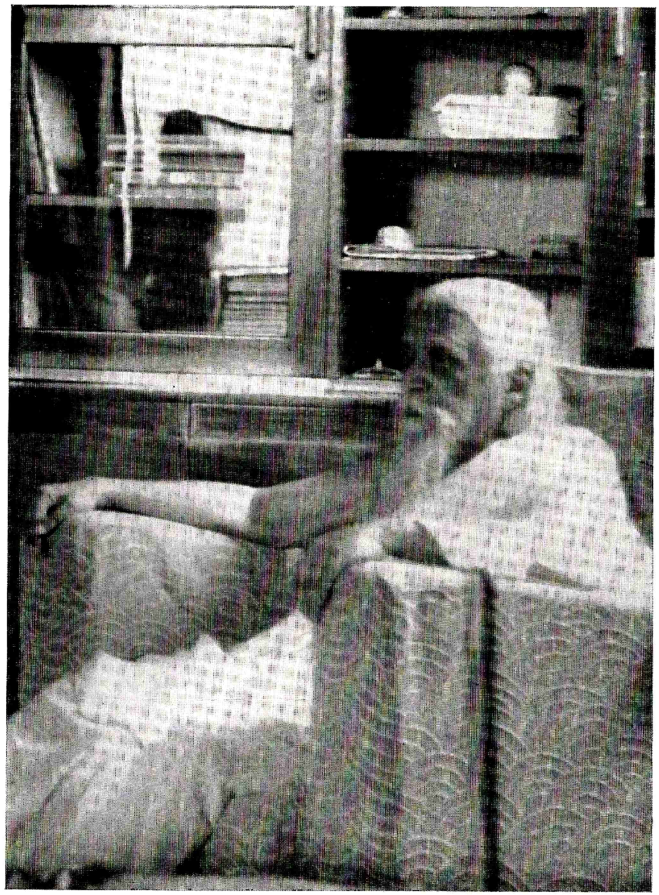
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother used to give Darshan four times a year



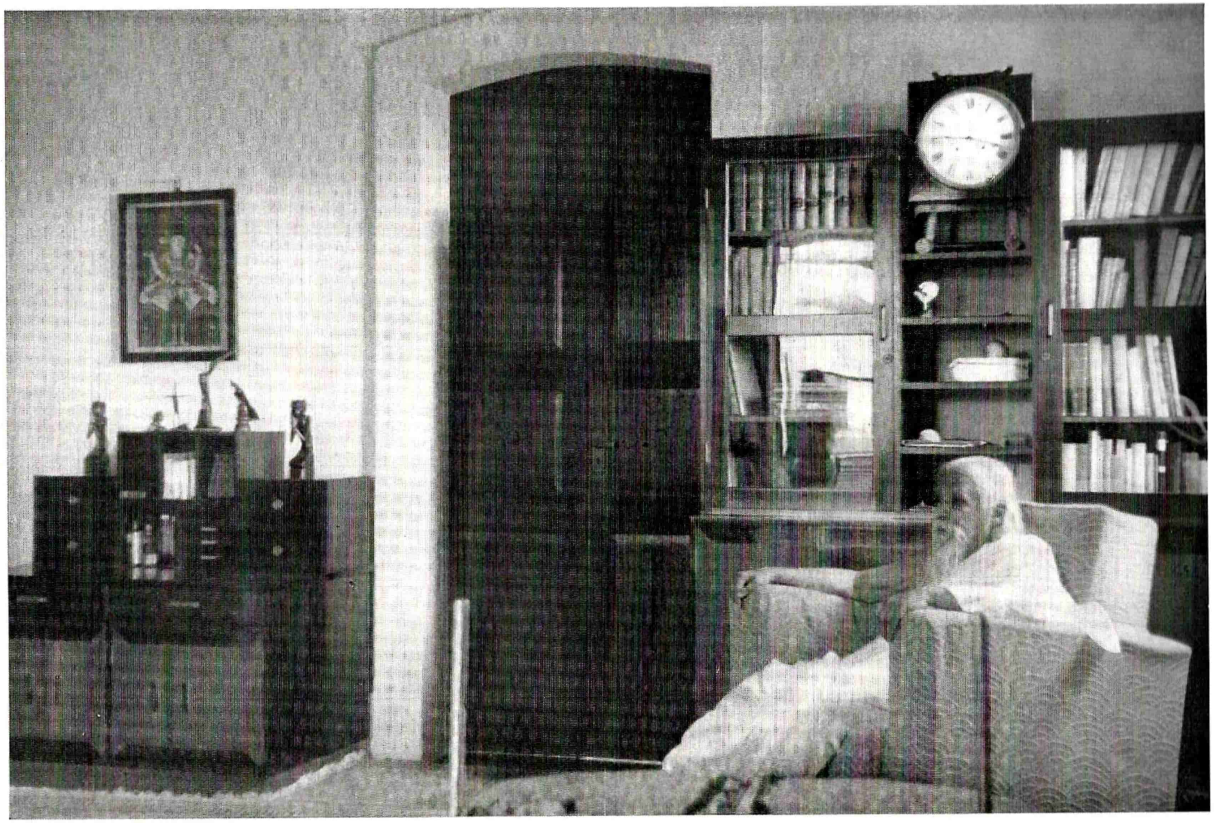
Savitri
Part I –
Book I
The Book of Beginnings
§ 19 The Symbol Dawn

It was the hour before the Gods awake.
Across the path of the divine Event
The huge forebiding spirit of Night, alone,
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence' marge.
A mute inconscient semblance of the Unknown,
Abysm of the unbodied Infinite
Whose futhonless yeas occupies the world,
Cradled the cosmic drowse of ignorant Force
In mould creative slumber kindling the sun,
That carries all things in its somnambulist whirl.
Across the vain enormous trance of Space,
Its formless atupor without mind or life,
A shadow spinning through the soulless Vast
Earth wheeled abandoned in the hollow gulf,
Forgetful of her spirit and her fate.
The impassive skies were neutral, empty still.
Then a blank presence yearned towards distant change.
A long lone line of hesitating hue
Like a vague smile tempting a desert heart
Trembled the far rim of life's obscure sleep.
Apparent on some unseen eternal verge
An eye of deity looked through the faint rift,
Calling for the venture of cons unwers and joy
Compelled renewed consent to ace and feel.
A thought was sown in the unwounded Void,
A sense was born within the darkness' depths,
A memory quivered in the heart of Time,
As if a soul long dead were moved to live;
In the oblivion that succeeds the fall
Blotted the crowded tablets of the past
And all that was destroyed must be rebuilt
And old and wrong laboured out once more.
At first a hint that hardly dared to be
And the night's forlorn indifference,
A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal,
The insistent thrill of a tree of young touch
Persuaded the inert black quietude
And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.

Facsimile of the opening page of *Savitri*

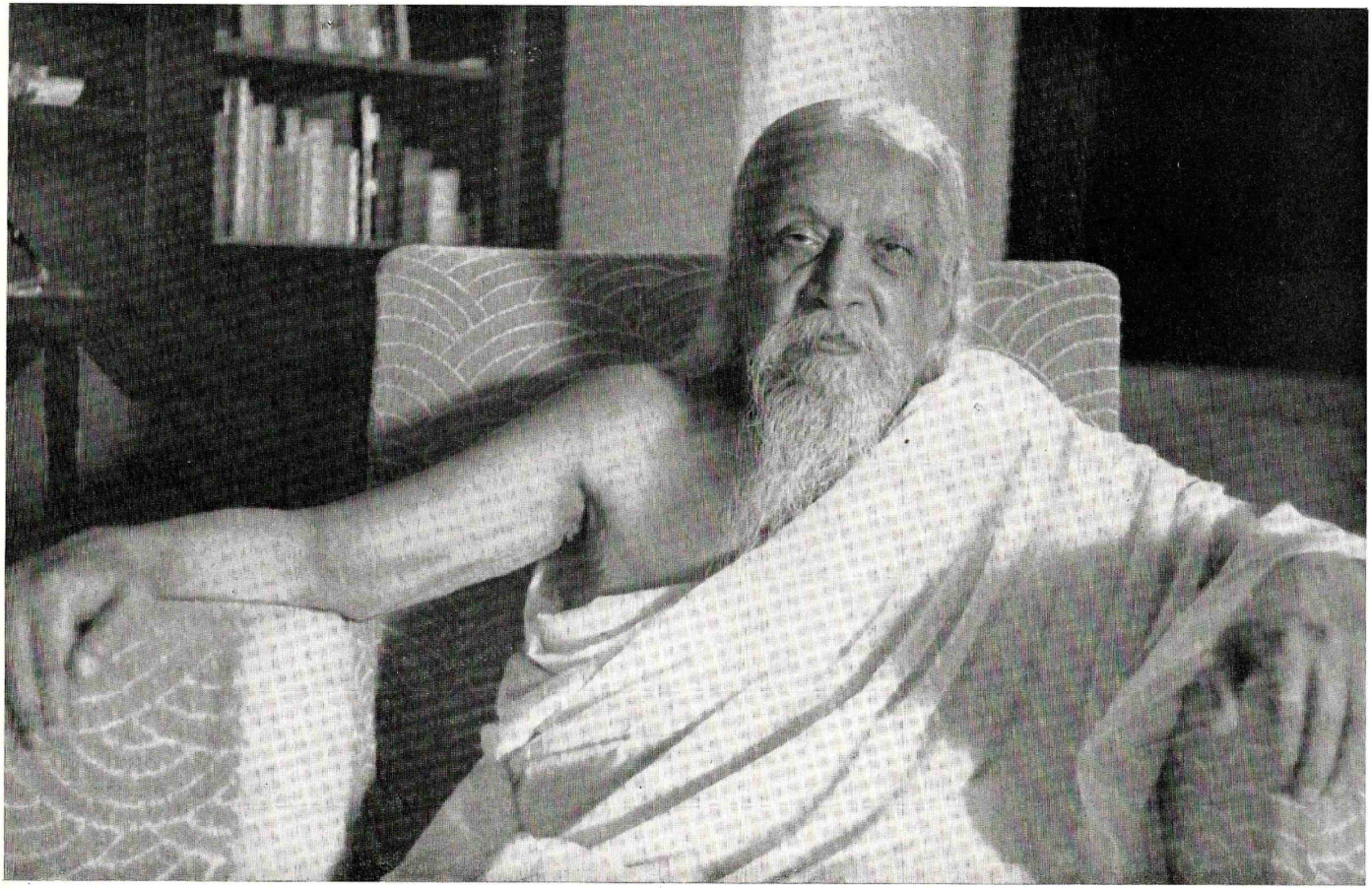


Sri Aurobindo, 1950

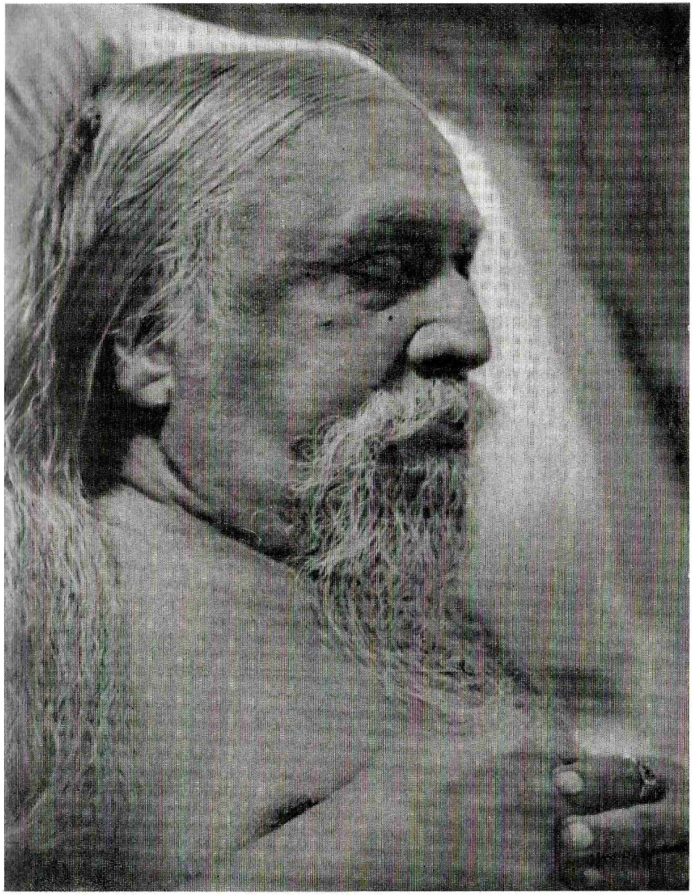


Sri Aurobindo in his room

In my yoga also I found myself moved to include both worlds in my purview — the spiritual and the material — and to try to establish the Divine Consciousness and the Divine Power in men's hearts and earthly life.



Sri Aurobindo, 1950



MAHASAMADHI December 5, 1950

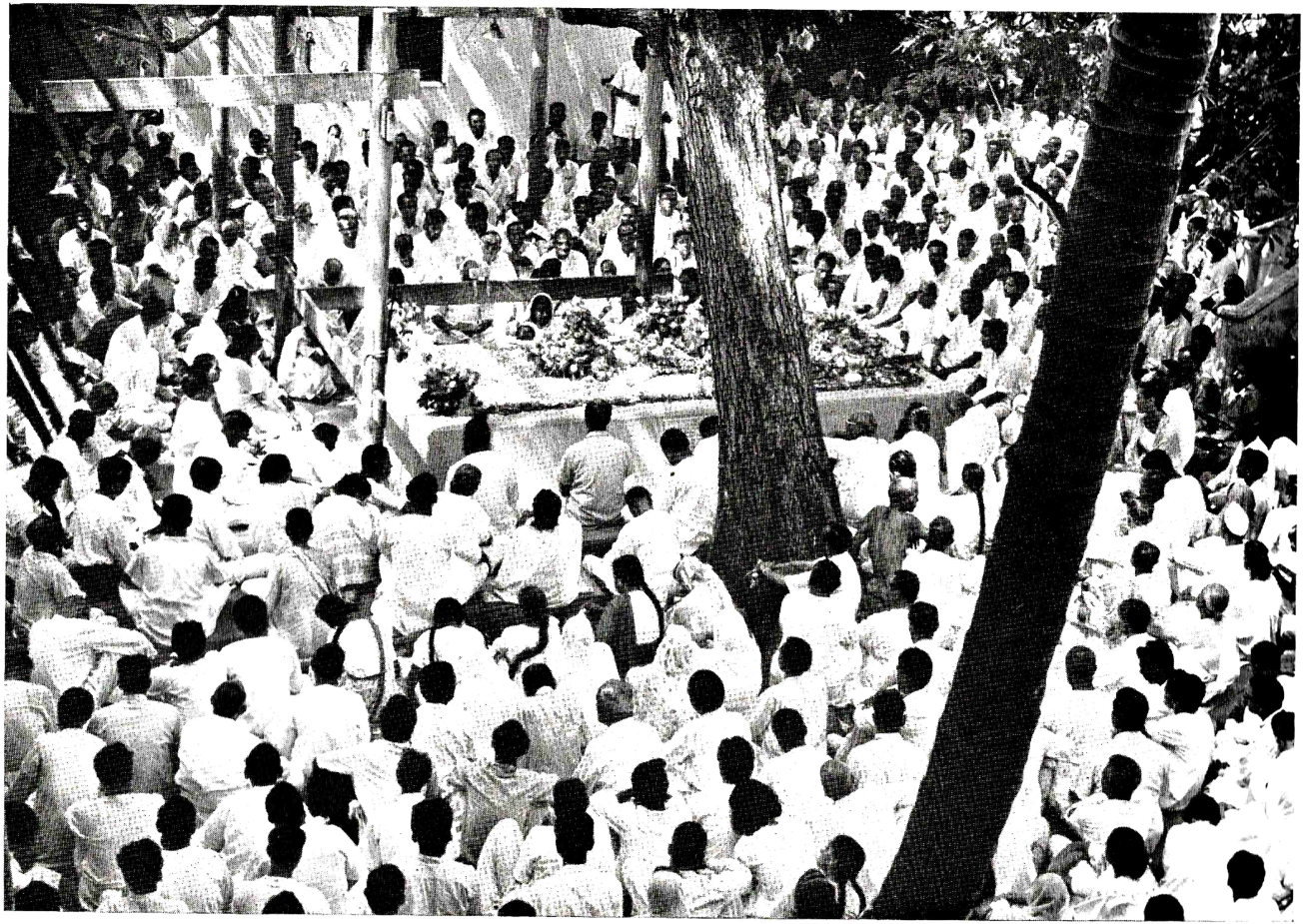
INSCRIPTION ON SRI AUROBINDO'S SAMADHI

To Thee who hast been the material envelope of our Master, to Thee our infinite gratitude. Before Thee who hast done so much for us, who hast worked, struggled, suffered, hoped, endured so much, before Thee who hast willed all, attempted all, prepared, achieved all for us, before Thee we bow down and implore that we may never forget, even for a moment, all we owe to Thee.

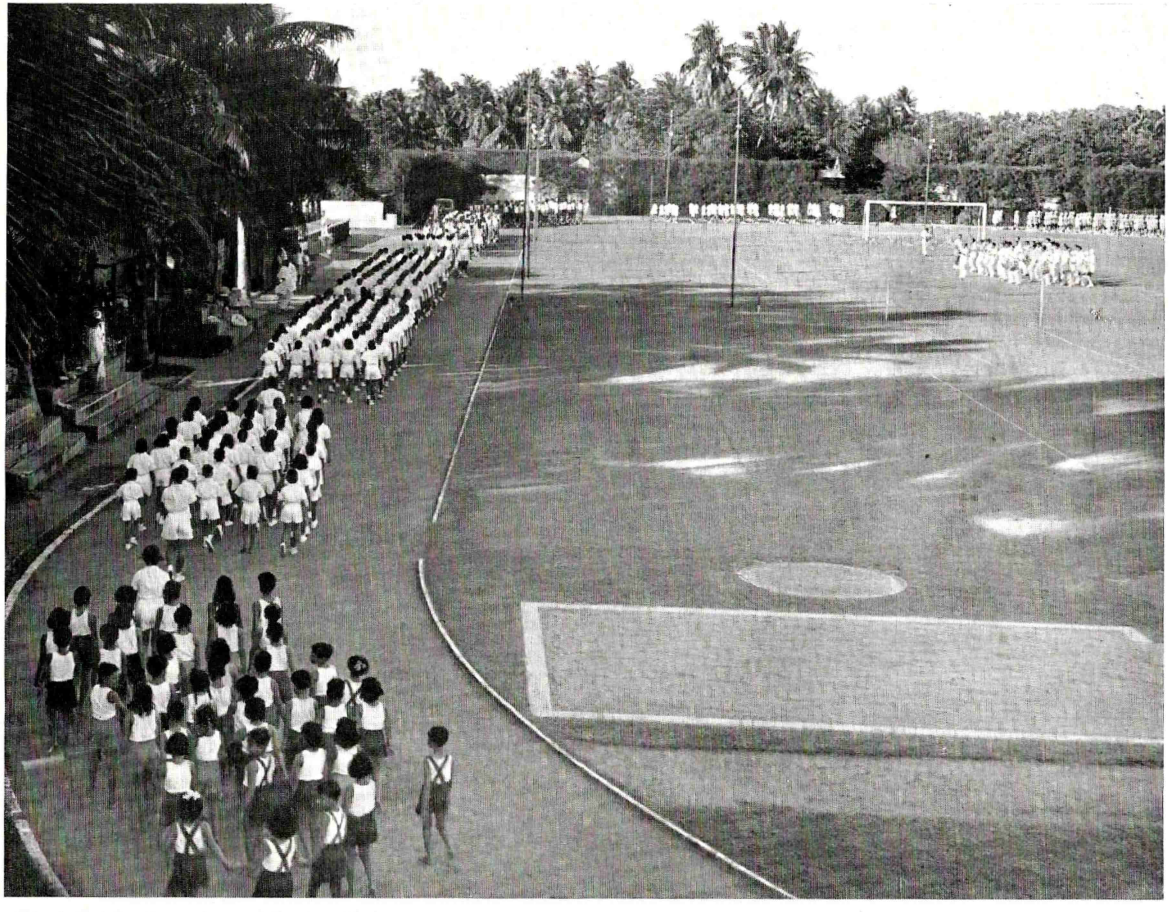
Smt. Indira Gandhi at Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi

Pondicherry was Sri Aurobindo's place of political exile and spiritual unfolding. His effulgent message radiated to different parts of the world from Pondicherry. It is appropriate that seekers of enlightenment from various lands should found a new city there bearing Sri Aurobindo's name...

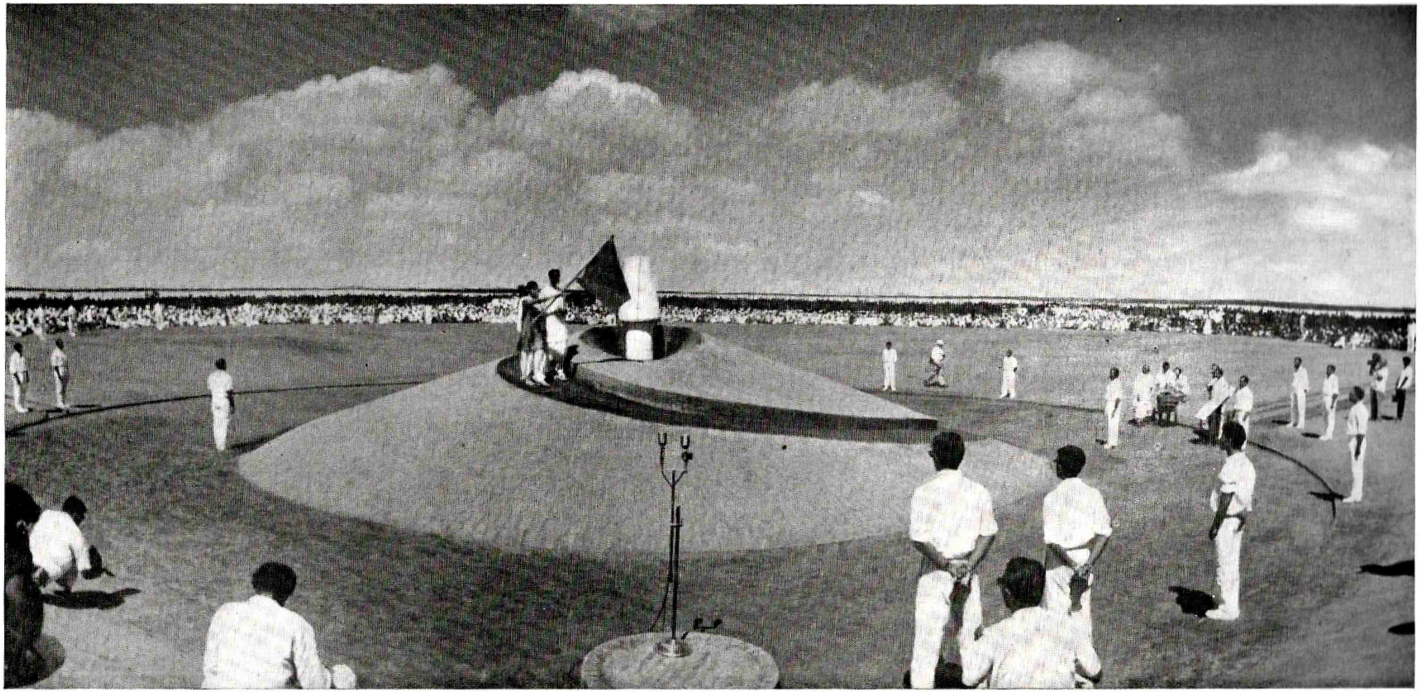
— Indira Gandhi



Meditation around Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi

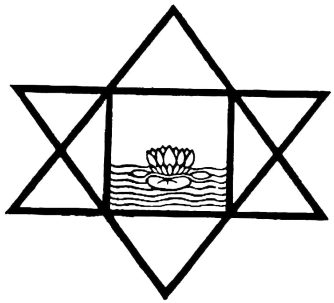


March Past by the students of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education



Foundation of Auroville

There should be somewhere upon earth a place . . . where all human beings of good will, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the Supreme Truth, a place of peace, concord, harmony . . .



The descending triangle represents Sat-Chit-Ananda.

The ascending triangle represents the aspiring answer from matter under the form of life, light and love.

The junction of both - the central square - is the perfect manifestation having at its centre the Avatar of the Supreme - the lotus.

The water - inside the square - represents the multiplicity, the creation.

Sri Aurobindo's Symbol